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in the

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The late C. F. Andrews and William W. Pearson with Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa

Charles Freer Andrews Memorial Volume

INDIANS
in the
EMPIRE OVERSEAS

A Survey

by

N. GANGULEE

Formerly Professor of the University of Calcutta

Foreword

by

LEONARD BARNES

London

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Dedicated
to
the memory of
C. F. ANDREWS

*whose unforgettable service to the cause
of Indians suffering from disabilities in
the Empire overseas endeared him to all
lovers of humanity.*

“Come then, Excellent Sir, and banish all fear of stirring the pygmies of our time ; long enough have sacrifices been made to ignorance and absurdity.”

(Oldenburg, writing to Spinoza in 1662)

CONTENTS

Frontispiece

Foreword	8
Preface	12

Chapter

1 The Problem	17
2 Indians in the Dominions	42
3 Indians in East Africa	90
4 Indians in other British Colonies	122
5 Life and Labour of the Indians in the Empire Overseas	160
6 What of the Future?	191
7 Postscript	231

Appendices

I. Indians in the Empire Overseas—A Census	238
II. The Mandates System	239
III. International Trusteeship System	241
IV. Selected Bibliography	244
Bibliography	245
Index	261

FOREWORD

BY LEONARD BARNES

Much has been written by Indians in protest against this or that aspect of British rule in India. This book has for its theme the ill-treatment of Indians when they leave their homeland to visit or settle in other parts of the British Empire.

By Englishmen who have been brought up to respect truth and to think well of their country (and which of us will claim that he lacks these advantages ?), Dr. Gangulee's work will be read with conflicting feelings.

Forbidden by the evidence to challenge the substantial accuracy of the picture he draws, they will admire the book as a balanced and scholarly study of a field where such studies are rare. They will acknowledge, again in admiration, that he writes with dignity and restraint of matters which might well have driven lesser men to charge their pens with anger and burning grievance.

But they will hate his picture ; partly because it displays the white-skinned overlords of the Dominions and Colonies in a hateful role, but even more because the cogency of his argument will force them to accept his case against their will, against all they have been told by their own pundits about British dealings with dark-skinned peoples. Almost all Britons cherish inter-racial fair play as a component of their ego-ideal, as a fondly imagined virtue of their group, even (God forgive them) as a peculiarity of the British Empire. It will do such people good to sit at Dr. Gangulee's feet and learn from him that their fancies are mere delusion or pretence. I hope that Lord Beaverbrook will include this ingredient in the knowledge of the British Empire that he wants our school-teachers to acquire and to impart to their young charges.

However the book may touch the reader's sentiments, it has a significant topical interest. It gives the full background needed for an understanding of the Indian delegation's grand remonstrance at the United Nations General Assembly in New York

in December, 1946—a remonstrance directed primarily to the racial oppression of both Indians and Africans at the hands of the European oligarchy in South Africa. The Assembly upheld the Indian plea by a majority of 32 votes to 15. World opinion has thus dismissed alike as inconsistent with the United Nations Charter and as untenable in itself General Smuts' unworthy claim that the racial discrimination of the ghetto is "essential to the maintenance of Western and Christian civilisation."

Humanists in every country, including South Africa, rejoice that a shallow and offensive pride of race should have suffered rebuke from such unchallengeable authority. For the patriotic Briton, however, there is nothing but humiliation in the circumstance that the British delegates should have led the reprovved minority, and rallied to the support of the least defensible features in the social life and politics of South Africa. No one who reads Dr. Gangulee's pages will remain in doubt why those delegates adopted a line which could serve only to discredit their country still further in the eyes of coloured people the world over, or why they proved so reckless of that consequence. The reason is that the British record in matters of racial discrimination is hardly better fitted to stand investigation than that of Smuts' South Africa. In effect, if not formally, the British Government were alongside Smuts in the dock. They shared, and, as this book shows, they have long deserved to share, the ignominy of the verdict against him.

Beyond its topical interest, Dr. Gangulee's work has a profound philosophic, and even tragic, meaning. The tragedy of power, we are often told, is that it corrupts. Lord Acton's famous phrase, now by repetition become a platitude, has seldom found a fuller illustration than in the British Empire of our times, with its all-pervasive colour bar, its bitter whirlpools of racial hate and violence. But Lord Acton was viewing only one side of the medal; Dr. Gangulee sees both. He deepens our perception of the corroding influence of power by the vivid stress he lays on the correlative corruptions of impotence. In his picture the villain of the piece is inevitably, and rightly, the white man, the tyrant and tormentor. But he does not portray the Indian victim as a mere sacrificial lamb, without blot or stain.

On the contrary, he is round in his condemnation of Indian planters in Uganda, for instance, who "succeed in becoming partners in the imperial designs of Europeans" for exploiting Africans. Of Indians elsewhere he observes that "there is a class who pursue the flourishing occupation of usury, using the traditional methods favoured by the circumstances of the life and labour of the natives—high rates of interest, sinister means of involving the native in heavy debts, controlling the marketing of his crops." Again he urges rich Indian money-lenders in Malaya to devote some of their resources to the welfare of their own poor, instead of pouring them out on temples to *Subramania*, and furnishing the priests and the ceremonial grandeur associated with the worship of that deity. A similar spirit informs what he has to say about a constructive relationship between Indian immigrants and the native people in all the lands they settle in.

Perhaps no one but an Indian is entitled to point with so much frankness to the failures of some sections of the Indian settler communities to live up to the highest ideals of citizenship professed (but seldom observed) by their oppressors. It certainly does not lie in the mouths of white men to object to such group-qualities among Indians abroad, or to use them for retorting upon Dr. Gangulee with counter-charges against his compatriots. For they are merely the evidence that impotence always corrupts, and absolute impotence corrupts absolutely. They are the natural effects of unnatural social isolation, of being starved of all sovereign self-expression, of being cut off from all discipline of responsibility. It will be time enough for British critics to complain of such Indian shortcomings when they themselves have abolished the conditions that give rise to them.

When Smuts in particular invokes the existence of Untouchables in India as vindicating his own anti-Indian ghetto Act he no doubt discovers a chink in the Indian armour. But his point is no more than a debating one. He forgets that no Indian legislature has legalised discrimination against the Scheduled Castes. On the contrary, the striking feature of the Indian scene to-day is that the tendency is uniformly towards breaking down the discriminations that convention, as distinct from law, has permitted or enjoined. For example, the Congress Government in the United Provinces is, as I write, introducing a Bill whose

object is to make the rights and privileges of Scheduled Castes identical with those of all other Hindus. If there are aspects of the cultural inheritance of Hinduism which liberal sentiment can but deplore, the Hindu community is at anyrate striving manfully to discard them.

On the position of Indians outside India, Dr. Gangulee, with unruffled good humour, says the last word. "How," he asks, "can a feeling of unity with the land of their adoption develop among Indians in your Dominions and Colonies, when they constantly live and grow up in the midst of a hostile environment and become fully aware of the political, social, and economic disabilities to which they are exposed?"

But for the people of Britain the last word must be rather different. "How long," we have to inquire, "are these Indian disabilities to remain in force? How long before a British Government, casting off the evil legacies of its predecessors, shall review colonial policy in relation to Indians in the creative temper in which and for which Dr. Gangulee pleads; and, instead of obstructing international efforts to improve standards of racial behaviour in the world, shall actively encourage and take the lead in them?"

PREFACE

This book is both a survey of the position of Indians in the Empire overseas and a challenge to the circumstances which make that position so humiliating. The problems concerning Indian immigration and colonization have always agitated public opinion in India, but my own interest in them dates from an experience which may be related here.

Years ago, before the First World War, I witnessed an imposing ceremony in Santiniketan, the seminary established by Rabin-dranath Tagore in Bengal. The occasion was the departure of two Englishmen—the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and the late Mr. W. W. Pearson—for the Fiji Islands, where they were to investigate the conditions of indentured Indian labour in the plantations.

There assembled under the mango-grove the yellow-robed teachers and pupils of the *Ashram* (Seminary). Several dainty trays containing various emblems of an auspicious ceremony such as paddy, blades of grass, sandalwood paste, etc., were placed in front of the little dais especially constructed for the occasion. Incense was burning in an earthen receptacle, and the sound of a trumpet announced the advent of an auspicious event. On the dais, the Poet sat with his two guests of honour. They were garlanded, and their foreheads were smeared, as is the custom, with sandalwood paste. Then the *Ashram* choir chanted Vedic hymns, a Sanscrit scholar recited *Slokas* (verses) and the Poet addressed the audience.

All this was impressive. Although the ceremony was performed before an assembly unfamiliar with the problems of indentured Indian labour, it was in conformity with the spirit of the Institution whose motto is : *Yatra Visvam bhavati eka-nidam*—Where the whole world forms its one single nest.

The occasion inspired me with enthusiasm for studying the system of recruiting Indian labour for the empire overseas. I was fortunate in my friendship with the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and the late Mr. W. W. Pearson. Their writings on the subject of the

position of Indians in South Africa and Fiji had great educative value and deepened my interest in the conditions of life in rural India where the supply of Indian labour is largely drawn for overseas.

As a member of the Bengal Labour Federation, I visited a number of labour recruiting depots in the United Provinces, Madras and Assam in 1921, and took part in organising the repatriation of Assam tea-garden coolies during the strike in 1922. Although it was common knowledge that miserable conditions of labour were prevalent in the tea gardens, and that the systems of labour recruitment either for plantations in India or in the Empire overseas were extremely unsatisfactory, I did not then realise the extent to which the exploitation of poverty-stricken labourers was made possible within the country itself. Turning to the fundamental cause which brought about this alliance between capitalistic plantation economy and unskilled labour, it became clear to me that the mischief arose from the disintegration of Indian rural life and from the progressive subjugation of the landless labourers themselves. Having excluded them from free access to land, the proprietary class reduced a great bulk of Indian population to conditions under which they became easy victims of economic servitude. And the process was accelerated both by our effete social system and by the slow development of the agricultural and industrial resources of India.

The question of emigration came before the Royal Commission¹ on Agriculture in India (1926-1928). It was found that, on account of restrictions imposed on Indian immigrants in the Dominions, the prospect of any considerable emigration for the purpose of settlement was confined to British Guiana; and the Report of the Commission expressed hope that a scheme then proposed by the Colonial Government should soon come into operation. The scheme was, however, abandoned.

Two years later I suggested that the possibilities of Indian settlement in the tropical and sub-tropical parts of the Empire should be re-examined, but the proposal was not favourably received by the officials in New Delhi. It was held that a further attempt to increase the flow of Indian emigrants would be prejudicial to the interests of those who were already domiciled in the Empire overseas. Besides, their position was likely to be increas-

[¹ The author was a member of the Commission.]

ingly difficult in the future with the growth of competing interests within the Empire.

Indeed, the inter-racial problems within the Empire have become more acute. Lord Hailey in his survey¹ of Africa south of the Sahara, observes that "the most conspicuous problem in connection with the non-European immigrant communities arises from the existence of Indians in South Africa and the British East African territories." But it manifests itself everywhere and involves the fundamental question of India's political freedom so that she may be on a footing of complete equality with the governments of the Empire. Not only has it caused a great deal of racial antagonism and political confusion, but it has undoubtedly widened a gulf between India and Britain to such a degree that no palliative measures or belated concessions can serve to reconcile India to her existing relations with the Empire. "This is the Empire to which we have the misfortune to be tied. The sooner this Empire ends the better for humanity; the sooner we cut away from it, the better for us," cries Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru after referring to the measures adopted by the Union of South Africa to segregate Indians. Indeed, India's position within the British Empire can never improve unless and until India has attained an independent national sovereignty. Only a free India can hope to protect and safeguard the interests of Indians residing abroad.

This book appears, I believe, at an opportune time. Today more than ever before the question of adjusting India's position within the Empire *vis-à-vis* other immigrants (including the Europeans) and the natives has to be faced with courage and vision. It involves a problem of far-reaching character in intra-imperial relations, and on its solution depends the possibility of retaining India as a free and voluntary partner in the Empire. The policy of racial segregation is both impracticable and disastrous—impracticable because India is determined not to tolerate this national humiliation, and disastrous because it is productive of those sinister forces for strife which undermine the foundations of democracy. The theory of racial inequality is proclaimed as a convenient shelter against the competition of cheap labour and low standard of living. Indeed, racial bar is just one of the ugly features of imperialism that promote serious maladjustments in human relationships. I remember at Geneva when one Asiatic

¹Hailey, *An African Survey*, 1939.

delegate moved a resolution calling for equality of civil rights between all races, the British representatives opposed it on the ground that without the assumption of racial superiority, the structure of the Empire could not be maintained!

Yet I believe that the British people do resent any form of statutory racial discrimination; but they do not sufficiently realise that while their leaders assert that the second world war was fought to end the Nazi theory of the "master race," there exist dangerous features in the field of inter-racial relations within their own empire. The prejudices against the coloured peoples find expression in a series of legal enactments imposing intolerable political, social and economic restrictions on them. At a time when the Imperial and Dominion Governments proclaimed that among their aims in the war were "the protection of democracy and the establishment of liberty," and called upon Indians to make sacrifices in defence of the Empire, the Government of South Africa introduced a number of Ordinances for the segregation of Asiatics inhabiting that country. Therefore, those who believe in democracy and desire to establish a co-operative basis of human relationships should understand the nature and extent of the struggle of Asiatic and African peoples against racial discrimination. It is hoped that this survey will be useful to them in obtaining some idea of the circumstances under which Indian communities in the Empire overseas are denied democratic rights and civil liberties.

I embarked upon this survey of the status of Indians in the Empire from yet another consideration. The problem has a close bearing on the wider issue of war and peace. The coloured races of the world have come to regard the white man's policy in Asia and Africa as a challenge to them, and they will not acquiesce in an inferior status allotted to them. They may not have an easy access to modern resources for armed conflicts, but in their persistent spirit of revolt there may be seeds of another world disaster. The sequence of events in the South Pacific area during the last war has shown that the situation arising from racial discrimination is fraught with grave risk. Let there be no mistake that colour bars will leave the door wide open for renewed international strife. Let the apostles of racial prejudice beware of the abyss of suffering into which civilization would plunge if they still believe in and act in accordance with the theory of racial inferiority. Meanwhile the

sustained pressure of public opinion is requisite to compel the governments of those states which impose legal disabilities on coloured peoples to abandon the policy utterly devoid of any ethical code by which mankind should live.

As a humble token of my gratitude and love, I dedicate the book to the memory of the Reverend C. F. Andrews in whom India has lost a trusted friend. His services to the cause of the Indians in the Empire Overseas will always remain a source of inspiration to those who endeavour to bring about a better understanding between the European and Indian communities. The latter regarded him not merely as a staunch opponent of racial discrimination but as one who cherished an unshakable faith in the just claims of Indians to equal citizenship throughout the British Empire. At grips with the problem in South Africa and the Colonies, Andrews attacked the evil at the root. It was largely through his efforts that Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, was persuaded to abolish the Indentured Labour System.

In conclusion I would like to acknowledge a small grant I received from the Trustees of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, New York, and from an Indian industrialist to enable me to complete this survey. I acknowledge too the value of help given by Mr. Howard Drake, M.A. and Miss Margaret MacDonagh, B.A. of the Royal Empire Society in collecting material and for the selected bibliography printed in this book.

N. GANGULEE

LONDON 1946

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM

I

The British Empire¹ covers almost a quarter of the land surface of the earth, and contains a quarter of the world's population. While the Dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) account for about 30 million people, India (excluding Burma) alone has a population not less than 389 millions. If we include the Dependencies of the Crown (colonies, protectorates and mandated territories), some 540 million people may be regarded as being subjects to British rule and governance. Thus this scattered Empire, with its island outposts and with areas as vast as a continent, represents a unique association in the history of human civilization. Within its ambit contrasts in race, colour, creed and language are more fundamental than in any previous empire; in climate, resources and cultural development there is as great a variety.

It is obvious, therefore, that the problem of the mutual relations of the diverse groups of peoples within the Empire is one of vital importance. The task of creating and maintaining its unity is not merely one of successful application of administrative energy: it calls also for a bold attempt to create and maintain a harmonious adjustment between the parts of the Empire on the basis of a free, co-operative commonwealth. It should, however, be recognised that the Empire, which has developed as the political expression of a monopolistic economic system, with the protection of the financial interests of an economically dominant class as the chief criterion of its government, cannot possibly effect the necessary transformation through merely palliative measures, calculated to soften the severity of economic exploitation. Since it is the basis of the economic form which appears to determine the social and political relations between the Europeans and the non-

¹ I have used the word "Empire" rather than "Commonwealth," because the former conveys the true conception of India's existing relationship with Great Britain. The appellation "Commonwealth" is, as Mr. Leonard Barnes puts it so aptly, "the imperialist euphemism for Britain and the Dominions in distinction from the Empire as a whole."

Europeans, the necessary change in economic conditions must be effected before the enlightened ideal of partnership can fully be realised. The principle of segregation of the coloured races is derived from slavery, and its justification is claimed to be not merely the preservation of the standards of Western civilization, but also the urgency of maintaining the political supremacy of the Europeans. Various devices are, of course, adopted to modify the exclusive character of their administration, but political ingenuity cannot permanently hold together the diverse elements of an empire; nor can the irrational economic system which functions as the mainstay of the political constitution ever establish true democracy and liberty.

Yet there are apologists of imperialism who discern in the variegated pattern of the Empire a model for the welfare of mankind. They justify its existence by virtue of the British tradition of freedom; they believe that the peace and prosperity of humanity as a whole rest upon the realisation of the imperial ideals; they seem to think that both in the form and function of the Empire there exist adequate cohesive forces such as are necessary to mould the divergent elements into an organic whole; and they justify their rights and privileges, derived from political power, on the ground that the task of governing the peoples under the imperial rule is "a sacred responsibility."

We are not concerned here with the validity of such claims; nor need we attempt an estimate of the degree of success attained by the Imperial Government in fulfilling their duty as trustees. The facts about the economic backwardness of the Colonial Empire, about the depressing circumstances of life and labour of the bulk of the population, and about the inadequacy of social services, can no longer be disputed. Not only from the West Indies, the oldest overseas possessions of the British Crown, comes the warning of grave discontent, largely in consequence of the growing power of the capitalists over the labourers; but also from other parts of the Empire, where economic relations have been subjected to severe strain through the political preponderance of the vested interests.

In addition to the many conspicuous features of ill-balanced economic relations within the Empire, racial antagonism looms large. It is one of the deadliest of all destructive forces, because racial prejudices are easily provoked. The governments of the

Dominions and Colonies give support to racial antipathies because they believe that for the permanent *white* domination of the Empire, the colour bar is a necessity. Dr. Norman Leys in his book, *The Colour Bar in East Africa*, shows that the Governments there impose on Africans heavier statutory disabilities than the Nazis impose on Poles and Czechs. The policy of the statutory colour bar has been in operation in the Colonies, and little do these Governments realise that it is this policy of racial discrimination which undermines the basis of democratic ideals so loudly proclaimed by the apologists of the Empire.

Today the gulf between the European and the non-European has lamentably widened in the Empire. All sections of Indian opinion view with concern that Indians in the Empire overseas remain victims of race prejudice and that their status is no way equal to that of the white peoples.

It appears, however, that the Imperial Government has a fairly clear perception of the risk involved in such a policy, for since the beginning of the century it has been anxious to avoid a schism between India and the Empire, and such altruistic sentiments as would convince the Indian proprietary classes of British sympathy have been expressed in inter-imperial conferences. In 1911, for instance, Lord Crewe, then the Secretary of State for India, observed in the Imperial Conference:

"However close the connexion and however perfect the understanding between the mother country and the self-governing Dominions, we are not a United Empire unless that understanding spreads, to some considerable extent, also to that vast part of the Empire, of which, of course, India is the most prominent division, but which also includes all the Crown Colonies which are inhabited by the various native races. . . . It is a distinct misfortune and a derogation from the unity of the Empire, if the mother country continually finds itself implicated in difficulties between various parts of the Empire."

The subsequent Imperial Conferences passed resolutions stressing the desirability of removing such disabilities as were imposed upon the Indians domiciled in the Empire overseas; but their incongruous position persists and even becomes worse.

The truth is, the spirit of these resolutions has not been accepted, by the Dominions and the Colonies. While the Union of South

Africa frankly refused to accept the resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1921, the Colonial Administration through the Secretary of State declared:

"I think there is only one ideal that the British Empire can set before itself in this regard, and that is that there should be no barrier of race, colour or creed which should prevent any man by merit from reaching any station if he is fitted for it. At any rate, I do not feel able to adopt any lesser statement of principle in regard to the Colonies, *but*¹ such a principle has to be very carefully and gradually applied because intense local feelings are excited, and there is no doubt that extraordinary social stresses arise when populations are intimately mingled in some of these new countries and brought into severe economic competition. The question reaches its acute form in Kenya."²

It is, as we shall see, with the object of securing the profits from land speculation that the Europeans in Kenya are so determined to reserve the Highlands for their own community. The history of their conflicts with the other immigrant communities here and elsewhere offers striking illustrations of the process towards the realisation of capitalistic ownership. We can also understand why they strenuously oppose the grant of privileges of citizenship to immigrant Indians; for it is only by resorting to such means that the European domination may be ensured.

However, it is no longer possible for us to evade the issue that concerns the life and labour of the Indians in the Empire overseas; and since the issue is inter-related with the politico-economic system of the Empire, our task is to bring about a fundamental change in our alliance with that system if we desire an equitable settlement of the problem of Indian immigration and settlement within the Empire.

It must be remembered that this problem has arisen, not from voluntary emigration but from artificial pressure brought to bear upon our indigent population by the East India Company and its successor, in order to secure cheap labour in the distant undeveloped areas of the Empire. With the sanction of the Government of India, it was the European planters who organised emigration, and it was the Government of India which became a

¹ *Italics mine.*

² Cmd. 1474, 1921.

powerful agent in the indiscriminate recruitment and transport of Indian labourers. True, the State had framed a series of laws and regulations, but they succeeded only in guaranteeing the persistence of labour exploitation by the European planters. Thus, the Indian immigrants cannot be accused of forcing themselves, as asserted by Lord Milner, "upon a community reluctant to receive them."

II

Soon after the abolition of slavery within the British Empire, in August 1833, it became necessary for the various colonial plantations to indent labour from India and China. The planters had foreseen a shortage in the labour supply in consequence of the passing of the Emancipation Act, and they instituted an indenture system among the negroes; but the emancipated slaves avoided the estates of the planters and "scorned to come" under any form of contract with them.

The owners of the sugar plantations in the Antilles and the Pacific Islands, however, discovered a profitable source of labour under conditions of employment no less advantageous to them than those under which the negro slaves had worked. Labourers from China were carried to distant lands under a system of contract which was, in fact, nothing less than a form of slavery. Since plantation economy could not function without some means of assuring the labour supply, the European planters, impelled by logical necessity, adopted a "semi-servile" system of indenture. They now looked to India as a source of assured cheap labour. Thus a new "species of colonial bondage" arose out of the abolition of slavery; and its yoke came to fall upon the neck of the Indian labourer.

The first officially recorded instance of genuine recruitment for emigration from India occurred in 1830, when a French merchant, Joseph Argaud, carried some 130 artisans to Bourbon. After that Indian emigrants were recruited in small batches for Réunion and other French colonies, but they cannot be classified as unskilled workers.

The first large demand for unskilled labour came from the sugar plantations of Mauritius and British Guiana. The directors of the East India Company asked Lord Auckland, the Viceroy of

India, to take necessary steps for the supply of Indian labour in the British colonies. The object of the European colonists was to secure a sufficient supply of labour at a minimum cost for a maximum period. The Emigration Act of 1837 was passed with the object of regulating recruitment, terms of contracts and transport. And so the Indian coolies went out to work for the British planter thousands of miles away from their homes in Southern India, perhaps remembering the saying, "Speed on the waves of the ocean in search of wealth."¹ By the middle of 1837, the number of Indian emigrants to Mauritius exceeded twenty-thousand. Within ten years a continuous stream of illiterate and helpless Indian labourers poured into Trinidad, Jamaica and Guiana.

The other colonial Powers became interested in the supply of cheap labour from India. In 1849 the French Assembly emancipated over 160,000 slaves then working in the *anciennes colonies* and abrogated the *Code noir*. The planters of the Antilles and Réunion were greatly alarmed at the prospect of a labour shortage and asked the French Settlements in India to explore the possibilities of obtaining a share of the emigrant labour. Although the British Government were unwilling to allow their competitors in colonial enterprise an easy access to indentured labour, the French merchants succeeded in carrying thousands of labourers chiefly from the Presidency of Madras. In 1851, there were as many as 23,000 Indian "coolies" in the island of Réunion.

We mention the part of India whence the coolies first emigrated in order to explain that the interdict on sea-voyages was not observed by the Dravidian peoples to whom "the sea was in all the ages a connecting link with" the neighbouring islands and countries. They had undertaken in times past frequent voyages to the shores of Africa. In a Greek papyrus of the second century, found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, for instance, occurs a conversation which scholars identified with the Kanerese language.² The interdict on sea-voyages arose partly from the conceit of the Brahminical oligarchy and was generally confined to Northern India, where in the face of the overwhelming proselytising efforts of Islam, the Hindus took precautionary measures through caste

¹ The saying is attributed to a Tamil authoress of the first century of the Christian era.

² Journal Royal Asiatic Society, 1904.

injunction against the loss of their rank by emigration. From a very early date the Indian traders from Kathiawar, Cutch and Malabar carried on a brisk trade with distant lands. In the thirteenth century the trading vessels from the west coast of India brought various commodities to the African coast. It was an Indian who piloted Vasco da Gama on his first voyage from Malindi across the Indian Ocean.

At present, the Indians settled in various parts of the British Empire outside India number over two and a half millions.¹ Their participation in the economic life of the Dominions and Colonies involves questions which can no longer remain unsolved. Nor can the economic circumstances arising out of Indian emigration be adjusted by racial segregation. The fact has become clear to Indians that their movement within the Empire on terms of equality is resented, and that the ideal of partnership within the British "Commonwealth" can be realised only if India acquires the status of a free and independent sovereign State.

It is argued that the recognition of the right of common citizenship is not a practical proposition, because it would eventually mean the disruption of the British Empire. On the contrary, a discriminative policy in regard to the rights of British subjects to migrate from one part of the Empire to another is undoubtedly responsible for the conviction that India cannot remain as a "free partner" within the Empire if her nationals are subject to racial segregation. With the growing realisation of the need of attaining national sovereignty, it is natural that a nation should be concerned with the conditions of its nationals living abroad. Public opinion in India has become increasingly sensitive about treatment accorded to Indians in the Empire overseas. It is not merely a question of justice and toleration, but it involves a far-reaching problem of the status of the nation itself.

India has the distinction of being a single large sub-continent without national sovereignty, and over 400 millions of her population constitute the largest subject race on earth. While the bond of servitude may have been relaxed, under the exigencies of circumstances, by allowing certain measures of representative government, the position of Indians within the Empire reveals the truth that there has been no fundamental change in India's political status. We appreciate the sympathy expressed with the

¹ Appendix A.

grievances of Indians in the Dominions and Colonies by the Imperial Government; we recognise the spirit of compromise with which they have from time to time approached the problem; but it is obvious that the position of Indians in the Empire overseas cannot improve unless and until India is able to gain for herself the status equal to that of an independent state. Then alone will her nationals come to be treated as "friendly aliens."

The restrictive and discriminative measures imposed upon Indians are inherent in the political and economic policy pursued by the Imperial Government, and they are bound to persist until a radical re-orientation in that policy is made possible. "India was not to be regarded as a mere adjunct to the British Empire. That detestable habit of regarding Indians, not as subjects in common with the rest of the Empire to their King-Emperor, but as 'our subjects', was to be abandoned," observes Professor Dodwell;¹ but mere declarations deploring discrimination against Indians within the Empire have not been effective. They are temporary palliatives to meet the exigencies of circumstances, and reveal the unrealities of Indo-British relations which can never be decent so long as India's political sovereignty is not derived from her own people. "The political sentiment, which is most widespread among all educated Indians, is the demand for equality with Europeans. . . . It is a great deal more than a personal feeling; it is the claim of the East for due recognition of status," observed the authors of the Indian Statutory Commission. But it is not merely a question of political sentiment or of equality with Europeans. *The status of Indians in the Empire overseas is an integral part of the Indian constitutional problem.* If in the past the question of that status appeared to have been confined to seeking redresses of certain grievances to Indians, it has now become a vital political issue.

Racial antagonism which accentuates the differences between Indians and Britons serves to create a barrier, and no one can deny that a great deal of bitterness between them may be traced to the manner in which Indian emigrants are treated in the Empire overseas. Their resentment at this treatment has given rise to a protracted conflict with the European settlers within the Empire, especially in South Africa and the East African dependencies. The Indian public regard the system of recruiting indentured labour from India and discriminative legislation against Indian settlers

¹ Professor H. H. Dodwell at a meeting of the East India Association, April, 1935.

and traders within the Empire as a stigma upon the people; to them the system of indentured labour appears as a badge of helotry, and the disabilities imposed on the settlers within the Empire as a contradiction to the oft-declared spirit of Imperial citizenship; and even if this unregulated, unscrupulous and inhuman exploitation of labour was abolished as late as 1920, it has left behind it an inheritance of racial prejudice and hatred. In South Africa, for instance, notwithstanding the restriction of Indian immigration into the Union, the policy of the Government is directed towards the segregation of the Indian communities domiciled there.

Nor is this question of an amicable settlement with Indians in the Empire overseas confined to South Africa, where the conflict, arising from the exploitation of Indian labour and racial discrimination, has become so acute: there is a far wider question which must be settled before India can regard her status and position in the British Empire as satisfactory. Economic and social problems arising from different standards of living and different levels of culture are undoubtedly difficult, but they can never be solved so long as British imperialism continues, by a sophistical interpretation of the position of India in relation to the Dominions and British Colonies, to deny Indians their rights and liberties merely because they are Indians. It has not been possible so far to find an effective *modus operandi* for bringing into play those elements of mutual relationship that will tend to heal the estrangement between India and the Empire overseas, and to harmonise their conflicting interests. It is well to state categorically that, unless and until the fundamental basis of unity, which consists in India's own independence, is attained, there can be no positive advance in her relationship with the Dominions and British Colonies. The theory that it should be possible to balance the claim of all interests within the sphere of what is implied by imperialism carries with it inherent contradictions, and can never be applicable to the solution of the problem. Any attempt hitherto made to do so only served to unmask the true face of imperialism. General (now Field-Marshal) Smuts laments, as a defender of democracy, the decay of political liberty in Europe, but advocates racial segregation when confronted with the task of harmonising the interests of the various racial groups in South Africa! There can be no partnership with India if the Imperial Government apply

one set of principles in their relationship with the Dominions and another for India. The main object in adopting the principle of segregation which regulates the relations between the European and other races is not administrative efficiency or the preservation of the standards of European civilization, but the maintenance of political and economic supremacy of the Europeans. It is the fact of economic competition that lies mainly at the root of racial problems and brings into play the colour bar in social and political relations. The colour bar is, in truth, an economic weapon. A great deal of the disturbance in social relations within the Empire is the outcome of economic imperialism, for it is from the shopkeepers' quarrels that there has arisen the cry of racial antagonism. It is the European planters' opposition to unrestricted access to the free lands that is largely responsible for the failure of land settlement schemes in the tropical regions of the Empire, where such developments are possible only through the stabilization of peasant agriculture.

Again, we ask, is it possible today to maintain the *status quo* of an industrial tradition built upon racial segregation, colour bar and subjugation of the indigenous and immigrant labourers by some milder form of servitude, if each free constituent member of the Empire is to contribute to the evolution of the Empire into an ideal form of commonwealth? How can the perpetuation of a white oligarchy in the social and economic relations of an empire consisting largely of coloured peoples ever ensure the power and independence of those millions who are asked to appreciate the benefits of their association with Great Britain? The political and economic disabilities, such as are imposed upon the coloured races of the Empire, are, of course, determined by the system under which they have been subjugated. But, is it possible to adhere to capitalist imperialism regardless of the changing circumstances of the world today? Indeed, the *status quo* of the nineteenth century Empire is intolerable to those who now realise that their position within the Empire is incompatible with honour.

III

Now that Indians are regarded as intruders and suffer from the humiliation inherent in the colour bar, discriminative legislation, denial of the common franchise and other civic rights in the

Dominions and Colonies, an estimate of what has been achieved there by their labour may not be irrelevant. When these parts of the Empire were faced with the problem of a scarce and intermittent labour supply, the importation of Indian labour, as we have already mentioned, saved the situation. At the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the European powers were vying with each other in exploiting all possible resources for the development of their colonial "possessions," Lord Salisbury encouraged indentured labour from India by promising that, after the expiry of the contract period, they would be "in all respects free members, with rights and privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of her Majesty's subjects resident in the Colonies." At that time the Cape House of Assembly in South Africa passed resolutions welcoming such a policy. Article XIV of the London Convention of 1884 between the Imperial Government and the Transvaal or South African Republic provided that all persons, other than natives, conforming themselves to the laws of the South African Republic "(a) will have full liberty, with their families, to enter, travel, or reside in any part of the country; (b) will be entitled to hire or possess houses, manufactories, warehouses, shops and premises; (c) may carry on their commerce either in person or by any agents whom they may think fit to employ."

But every word of this article has since been grossly violated, so far as Indians are concerned, and the manner in which it has been done is indeed one of the sordid pages in the history of India's relations with the British Empire.

Since there exists colossal ignorance about the nature of race relations within the Empire, even among responsible men, it is not appreciated that in colonisation enterprising Indians have made a substantial contribution by their skill and arduous labour. In the plantations of Mauritius, British Guiana, the West Indies, South Africa and Ceylon, in building railways in East Africa, in exploiting the wealth of the mines in Natal and other African territories, in the lumber camps of British Columbia and Malaya—in all these pioneering enterprises they have provided the diverse economic needs at a time when no other supplies of labour were available. In East Africa, where Indians are now subjected to segregation, disenfranchisement and social disabilities, they came first as traders and not as coolies. The fact is recognised by the

Government of India, for in their despatch to the Secretary of State for India in 1908 they stated that "Indian settlers lived and traded in British East Africa long before the days of British rule, and their status in the country and their claims to political recognition are such that they cannot be overlooked. We believe, however, that these claims are not regarded with favour by the white colonists, that the Indians as a whole are disliked by them."

Sir John Kirk, an eminent authority on the problems of East Africa and Zanzibar, stated in his evidence before the Sanderson Committee¹ that "but for the Indians we should not be there now. It was entirely through being in possession of the influence of these Indian merchants that we were enabled to build up the influence that eventually resulted in our position." Today at least three-quarters of the business houses and stores in Nairobi belong to Indians and they employ Europeans in their growing commercial concerns. The bulk of the Indian settlers in the colony are engaged as railway servants, carpenters and artisans of various kinds, and it would be a calamity for the future of this colony if they are not made to feel that they are *partners* in the development of the country. No honest white settler would deny that the Kenya and Uganda Railway owes its very existence to Indian labour, and that Indians hold a big stake in the colony as a whole.

The economic history of British Guiana, Mauritius and Fiji is similar. The expansion of rice cultivation in these colonies is largely due to Indians' knowledge and skill in rice-growing. In 1858, thirteen years after the introduction of the indentured system of labour from India for the supply of West Indian plantations, Governor Keate in a despatch to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, admitted that the island of Trinidad was mainly indebted to Indian immigration for its progress. "Had it not been for this immigration," wrote a high official, "Trinidad would have been blotted out of the map as a sugar producing colony." The prosperity of Mauritius, since the abolition of slavery, is wholly due to Indian labour; the cultivation of the sugar cane in Fiji was made possible by the emigrants from India; and the prosperity of the colony of Natal, where so much trouble has arisen over the treatment accorded to Indians, was also made possible only by Indians. The agricultural development of Natal is due almost entirely to the Indians who

¹ The Committee appointed by the Colonial Office in 1909.

settled there. Five years after the first batch of indentured labourers reached Natal, the *Natal Mercury*, a journal of the European planters, declared:

"Indian immigration, after several years' experience of it, is deemed more essential to our prosperity than ever. It is the vitalizing principle. It may be tested by its results. Had it not been for the coolie labour, we should not hear of the coffee plantations springing up on all lands, and of the prosperity of the older ones being sustained solely through the agency of East Indian men. Had it not been for Indian labour, we should certainly not have had it to say that our sugar export increased from £26,000 in 1851 to £100,000 in 1864, and has prospects of a greater increase before it."

Sir Leigh Hulett, ex-Prime Minister of Natal, said:

"The condition of the colony before the importation of Indian labour was one of gloom; it was one that then and there threatened to extinguish the vitality of the country and it was only by the Government assisting the importation of labour that the country began at once to revive. The coast had been turned into one of the most prosperous parts of South Africa. They could not find in the whole of the Cape and the Transvaal what could be found on the coast of Natal—10,000 acres of land in one plot and in one crop—and that was entirely due to the importation of Indians. . . . Durban was absolutely built up by the Indian population."

Thus, in drawing up a balance sheet for the British Empire, one would find what contributions have been made by Indians to the development of its natural resources. They brought with them from their homeland their traditional skill in cultivating rice, and they have reclaimed vast areas of swamp and river-bottom lands. The introduction of Indian cattle into Jamaica and the Indian camel into Australia have proved to be valuable assets to agriculture and transport. Those little shops owned by Indian traders, which are to be seen in every settlement, and the Indian pedlar travelling from one settlement to another, fulfil an important function in the economic life of the native. Yet the Indian is now regarded as an intruder, and the cry of the "Indian menace" is persistently raised by the defenders of British imperialism and by those who desire the supremacy of the white races.

But these imperial apologists forget that by their attitude towards the Indians in the Empire overseas, they have alienated the largest unit in the Empire. In their blind faith in the "argument of force" they do not seem to realise that, by ignoring the inherent strength of that one unit, they undermine the very structure which they wish to uphold. They raise the controversy of Indian competition in the Dominions and British Colonies, and argue that their policy of restricting Indian immigration and of encouraging Indians to settle is based upon the principle of the paramountcy of native interests; but the truth is that native interests are generally subordinated to those of the European. "When the historian of the future looks for examples of the worst result of the capitalist system of society," writes Dr. Leys,¹ "where avarice allied with racial pride and domination showed least signs of shame, where the common people were most despised and poorest, where the law was least regarded and loyalty least possible, he will point to South Africa and Kenya." The declaration that "the natives cannot be treated as a mere accessory to the immigrant community" is a screen to hide the Imperial policy of protecting the interests of the European settlers and traders. Anxiety to extend the "benign influence of Western civilization" to the natives is in reality a cloak to protect them from other more adaptive and congenial influences which might accelerate their awakening from a state of abject submissiveness.

Now the time has come for abandoning any short-sighted policy which must affect each and all constituent parts of the Empire. For the approach to the crucial problems of the Empire it is necessary to view the situation from a wider angle, so that the true perspective may not become blurred. It is necessary to combat the idea of race superiority, which is the most pernicious of all prejudices. We should remind ourselves that the civilized world today repudiates the racial theory of Nazi Germany. For the purpose of economic adjustments among the units of the Empire, the inheritance of old prejudices and racial bias must be set aside, and new attitudes of mind should be developed in order to comprehend the new basis of intra-imperial relations.²

¹ *A Last Chance in Kenya*, Dr. Norman Leys.

² Sir George Schuster in his book on *India and Democracy* (1941), has dealt with the problem of eradicating racialism from the British Empire, and urges that, if distinctions between races have to be recognised, there must be complete reciprocity, and that the distinctions must be distinctions between equals, not between superior and inferior.

IV

"I would like to think," observed His Majesty King George V in his broadcast message on Christmas Day, 1934, "all the peoples of this Realm and Empire are bound to me and to one another by the spirit of one great family. . . . The world is still restless and troubled. The clouds are lifting, but we still have our own anxieties to meet. I am convinced that if we meet them in the spirit of one family we shall overcome them, for then private and party interests will be controlled by care for the whole community."

Similar sentiments were expressed by Queen Victoria. But racial discrimination within this "one family" does exist, and the declared policy of the South African Dutch colonists¹ in the last century that "there shall be no equality between the white and the non-white" is pursued by the British colonists throughout the Empire. The circumstances of economic relations between them aggravate the racial prejudices and bring about the clash of colour, but when it appears in discriminative legislation, the principle is defended on the ground that the precious heritage of Western civilization in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and in the Colonial Empire has to be preserved for the benefit of mankind! The exploitation of the native labour for the development of the European plantations is regarded as the means of civilizing the Africans; for "it is to the natives' advantage to come out to work on European farms, since they gain thereby in training and outlook from contact with western ideas." . . .² The purpose and aim of maintaining the "colour bar" must also be for the good of the natives! They work in mines, in factories, on plantations and on farms, but the conditions of life in these fields of labour, as revealed in evidence before an Economic Commission in Durban, reflect no credit to the self-assigned trusteeship. Public opinion in the Empire is instructed to regard the coloured man as inferior and to allow him no opportunity of exercising any power in the Government. Africa is now a "white man's country" and the task of governing the coloured races is his "sacred

¹ With a feeling of horror the Dutch emigrants viewed a policy that placed white and black on an equal footing and interfered in the relations between master and man. (*The Black Man's Burden*, John Burger, 1943.)

² *Kenya Days*, by Mrs. M. A. Buxton.

mission." It is with this belief that the European powers advocate and justify the policy of segregation, and take care not to weaken prejudices against the coloured races in the Dominions and Colonies. Since the reins of political and economic power must always remain in the hands of the Europeans in order to ensure their lasting dominance over the coloured peoples, the doctrine of racial superiority must be upheld.

We are here concerned with the Indian settlers. The European planters could not foresee that Indian coolies might even survive the social conditions in a distant land where they had to labour under galling disabilities. The conviction that Indians would not be able to play a rôle in modern civilization was deeply rooted in their minds; but as soon as it became evident that they possessed intrinsic qualities for securing their place in the economic life of a foreign land, the discriminative attitude towards them found expression in a manner which precipitated conflicts and crises in the Dominions and British Colonies. Racial antagonism, colour prejudice, numerous restrictions and disabilities were invoked to prevent them from adjusting their position within the British Empire. How pronounced are the symptoms of racial antipathy may be realised from a few instances quoted here.

Perhaps the first experience of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in South Africa where he went as a barrister may be of interest to the reader. I quote from an account given by Sarah Gertrude Millin. She writes:

"On his first day in Durban he went into court, and sat there in his turban of an Indian barrister. He was ordered to remove his hat or leave the court. He left the court.

"Having to be in Pretoria for his case, he took a first-class railway ticket. But a fellow-passenger objected to travelling with Indians, so Mr. Gandhi was sent into the van compartment. He refused to go, and was forcibly ejected, and his luggage pitched out on to the platform. The train departed without him.

"To complete his journey, he had to travel by coach. He happened to be sitting on the box-seat, and someone else wanted to sit there in order to smoke. He told Mr. Gandhi to accommodate himself at his feet, and when the Indian would not move, he struck him in the face.

"So innocent was he still that, on arrival at Johannesburg, he drove up to a hotel. He was denied admission."

The Government of India has now an Agent-General (whose status was raised to that of High Commissioner in 1941) in the Union of South Africa to safeguard the interests of Indian settlers. About five years ago, a distinguished Agent-General and his wife visited a commercial house in Johannesburg. They arrived a little early and consequently were not met at the door by a representative of the firm. "They therefore tried to enter the lift, but the lift-boy explained that his orders were to admit no coloured people. Sir Raza Ali protested, told the boy who he was, and explained why he had come, but all to no purpose. Fortunately a neighbouring lift-boy used his discretion more wisely, and they were taken up."¹

The Reverend C. F. Andrews was asked to preach a sermon in one of the churches in Durban. He invited Mr. Gandhi to come and hear him preach; but on his arrival at the door of the church with Mr. Pearson, the doorkeeper said that Mr. Pearson could come in but Mr. Gandhi must keep outside, because he was an Asiatic.

In Cape Town, where race prejudice is not quite so bad as in Natal, there was a church which actually supported Indian Christian Missions. Andrews once took Mr. Gandhi's son Manilal with him to hear him preach in this church believing that there could be no objection to an Indian as the church was supporting Christian Missions in India. But Manilal said to Andrews: "You don't know these people as much as I do. It is impossible that I would be allowed inside the church."

Andrews insisted on taking Manilal with him. "The only thing I could get for him," writes Andrews, "was the very corner seat just at the edge of the doorway. I was told he must not go up into the church because if he did, it would be objected to."

An Indian Christian Professor of Comparative Religion was travelling through the United States, lecturing for the Carnegie Foundation. He had got to Seattle and presented his passport in order to cross over the border into Canada and visit Vancouver; but he was refused because he was an Indian. Though a British

¹"Indians in South Africa," by Stanley Rice, *Asiatic Review*, July 1938.

subject, he could not enter British Columbia on account of its anti-Asiatic legislation!¹

The nature of the treatment accorded to Indians in the Colonies is even worse than that in the Dominions. Sir Edward Buck, a distinguished English journalist, tells us² about his visit to Kenya. He writes: "Should an Englishman ask him (a respectable and prosperous Indian resident of Nairobi) to a meal in a hotel, the host would be courteously but firmly informed that he had committed a breach of etiquette and would be requested not to repeat the invitation." Sir Edward then quotes a statement from the *Kenya Daily Mail* of April 12th, 1935. Alluding to discrimination against Asiatics and the Japanese nation, the paper says: "Moreover the hotels do not accept Indians, even if they are representatives of Government, and come on Government missions, but they do accept Japanese."

To Sir Edward, who has lived amongst us in India and has taken more than a casual interest in the future of our country, the persistence of what is known in East Africa as "the Indian question" appeared to be anomalous in view of the advancement of India's constitutional position. He expressed surprise because the Indian noblemen, whom the Viceregal Court in India treated with the utmost courtesy and consideration, received different treatment from the Europeans in the colony, and he commented upon the situation in the following words: "The fact that an Indian Maharaja of ancient lineage, possessing the highest degree in the order of Knighthood, and perhaps the distinction of being an A.D.C. to His Majesty the King-Emperor, does not receive even ordinary civility is surely a position which cannot last much longer."

Indeed, the position is fraught with grave risks, not because of occasional tactless exhibitions of racial antagonism to Indian feudal lords or even to Indian agents of the Government of India, but there are indications of developments in the Dominions and Colonies which are likely to affect seriously the status of Indian settlers as a whole in the future. The Indians in South Africa are today in a worse position than ever they have been: opinion is hardening against domiciled Indians and against immigration.

¹ "The Psychology of India" (a broadcast speech), by C. F. Andrews, *The Listener*, 30th January, 1935.

² "Kenya Revisited," by Sir Edward Buck, *The Times of India*, Bombay, 8th June, 1935.

It is publicly declared that legislative measures restricting the freedom of the Indian trader are urgently needed, so that the bulk of internal trade may not pass into his hands. The Nationalist Party in South Africa has already raised a note of warning that, should India succeed in acquiring Dominion Status, the Union Government must be ready to resist any attempt on the part of the domiciled Indians to obtain political or even municipal rights. In certain quarters every expression of "an accommodating and friendly spirit" towards India and her nationals in the Empire overseas is regarded as a sign of weakness on the part of the authorities. The recognition of the rights of Indian members of the "Great Family" within the Empire overseas would eventually mean, it is feared, the disruption of the British Empire! That is why the Dominions exclude them from their territories under various pretexts, and what is more, they are often treated worse than other Asiatics. Even students, tourists and business men from India are subjected to unnecessary restrictions in the Dominions. In Canada, the Indian immigrant is required to possess more money than a Japanese. The Dominion admits a maximum of 150 Japanese per year, for permanent settlement, but a similar privilege is refused to Indians. The Government of Australia penalises British ships employing Indian sailors in their waters, though they do not object to a Chinese crew; and in the Union of South Africa, the employment of European women by Indian firms is made illegal. The Union Government introduced legislation with regard to mixed marriages between Indians and Europeans, although since 1930 there have been only five such unions in the Transvaal and fewer still in Natal. In violation of the Cape Town Agreement (1927) and all other settlements previously arrived at (*e.g.* the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement) between India and South Africa, the Union Government have introduced measures for racial segregation which affect both the status and livelihood of Indian settlers, the great majority of whom are born in South Africa.

V

My countrymen must, on their side, realise that their protest against the monstrously unjust treatment accorded to the Indians overseas would have gained moral force if they had turned the

search-light of truth inwards, and had been determined, without compromise, to uproot a system which is far more iniquitous than indentured labour or the restrictions imposed on Indians in the Dominions and the Colonies. They must realise that, so long as they maintain an iniquitous social system in their own country which tolerates disgraceful oppression and injustice, they cannot with complete justice protest against the action of the Europeans in imposing the racial bar. If they take shelter either under the cloak of sophistry or the banner of imperialism, we hallow certain social systems under the sanction of religion. If the anti-Asiatic laws are regarded as an invention of racial arrogance, equally so is the caste organisation of the Brahmanical hierarchy. If our countrymen are segregated in the British Colonies and Dominions, we should regard the treatment as a just Nemesis which has overtaken us for the crime of untouchability. We should also remind our educated and propertied classes that their treatment of the backward castes and races is far from what it should be, and that so long as serfdom prevails in India we cannot offer a moral challenge to such iniquities as exist in the treatment of Indians overseas. We must get rid of the systems such as *Kamiati*, *Veth* and *Khambari*.¹ Here lies great scope for determined efforts on the part of the youth of India. If we tolerate feudalism within the country and resist the rising tide of unity and cohesion among the labouring classes, our struggle for freedom will never gain strength. The march of freedom for the common man has begun and there is no room for racialism in the people's revolution.

We are, however, right in our determination not to tolerate any longer the humiliating position imposed upon us in the Dominions and Colonies ; if India's status as an equal partner in the British Empire is to be real, we must insist upon all that free citizenship implies. We must, on the other hand, resist with equal determination the social contradictions that exist in the relationship between *our* varied communities; we must resolutely undermine the sources from which spring the corroding influence of socio-religious strife; and we must strive towards the gradual coalescence of diverse and conflicting interests into that solidarity of purpose which will make our own position invulnerable.

The Indian settlers and traders must also realise the need for adjusting their relationship with the natives of Africa. From a

¹ These are various forms of labour-contracts analogous to serfdom.

very early date the Indian traders from the western coast of India migrated to East Africa, but they made no attempt to establish close contact with the people. They were not in any sense purveyors of Indian culture: trade was, and still is, their central interest.

But it is not enough that they should be friendly in their attitude towards the natives, or should partially succeed in gaining their confidence. Realising that they themselves are victims of aggressive aspects of capitalism which acquire a much more vicious character when blended with racial antipathy, the Indians must not allow their relationship with Africans to be distorted by selfishness, by fear of competition or by colour prejudice. They must not be accused of being partners in adopting, in their colonizing enterprises, such means and methods as are contrary to the interests of the indigenous population. The disastrous consequences of greed on the part of the European powers have brought about anarchy and untold miseries, not only among the subjugated peoples, but also among those who exploited them. While it is true that Indian shopkeepers and traders from Gujrat, Sind, Bombay and the Punjab adapt themselves to the mechanism of the trade and commerce established by the European, they are equally indifferent to the need of a new orientation in regard to the economic system, which denies justice to the natives. There can be no solution to their own problems if they remain as minor agents in the process of exploitation and look only for their own security. If the phrase "paramountcy of native interests" is ignored as being an expression of "harmless idealism," it is for the Indian settlers to identify themselves with such efforts as would make that ideal effective in their dealings with the peoples of the countries where they make their homes. We hear of complaints that Indian merchants in Africa are avaricious and overcharge the natives, that they are jealous of those Africans who are coming to share in the economic life of their own country as artisans and traders, and that the natives, when employed as agricultural labourers by Indians, do not get fair treatment. This may be true; for the very character of the economic structure under which the Indians work encourages the demoralising tendency of exploiting the poor. Such practice is abhorrent, and, in the long run, ruinous to the Indians themselves. The Indian National Movement cannot support efforts of the overseas Indian communities designed

only to protect their own interests, irrespective of the paramount interests of the countries where they settle.

The future of Indian settlers is dependent upon another essential factor which must be mentioned here. It is the need for reconstructing the social life of the immigrant Indian community. If the Indian settlers deny, for example, a measure of freedom to their women, arrest free development of the younger generation, or allow religious dogmas to create factions, they will never command respect from the natives and from other immigrant communities. Their struggle for political rights will acquire strength if it is supported by determined efforts to renovate the social life and environment in conformity with the needs of the modern world. There can be no quick and facile remedies for the disabilities from which they suffer; and their ultimate success as settlers in the Empire overseas will be determined, not merely by the improvement of living conditions, but by the degree of enthusiasm they may arouse in the spread of education, in the establishment of cultural relations with other communities and, above all, in the development of solidarity among themselves.

Our concern in India about the position of Indians in the Empire overseas must now acquire a positive character. Incidents of gross injustice or outbursts over trade disputes cause a flutter in our press and on the platform. We protest against a policy of racial discrimination and ask the Government of India to exert pressure upon the Governments of the Dominions and British Colonies for the redress of our grievances, and we base our claims for equality on the promise made after the Indian Mutiny by Queen Victoria, that her Indian subjects would be treated no differently from her other subjects. Some of us indulge in a dramatic reiteration of Lord Lytton's reference to the British pledges to India: "of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear."¹ Others believe that the intervention of the Christian missionaries would be fruitful of happy results.

¹ Twenty years after Queen Victoria's Proclamation, Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, wrote in a confidential letter to the Secretary of State for India (Lord Cranbrook) as follows:

"We all know that these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled. We had the choice between prohibiting them (Indians) and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course. . . . I do not hesitate to say that both the Government of England and of India appear to me up to the present moment unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they have uttered to the ear."

All this is in vain. Our approach to the problem should be based on realism. It is from the standpoint of India's *free and voluntary* partnership with the constituent parts of the Empire that a solution has to be reached. It is a matter of common sense and not of sentiment; for the denial of unconditional freedom to India would be totally incompatible with the changing circumstances of the world. At a time when the struggle for imperial unity has become a vital concern, we may ask, "Is it possible to assure even a semblance of cohesion under conditions so menacing as those to which Indians in the Empire overseas are exposed?" A line of action, I repeat, prejudicial to the largest single unit of the Empire is indeed an attack upon the Empire itself.

We must, therefore, consider the problem of Indian immigration and settlement in the Empire overseas in a broader perspective. The time is ripe for the adoption of a long-term policy for the development of the tropical and sub-tropical zones of the Empire. Within the ambit of that policy we maintain that there should still be scope for Indian immigrants to share in the utilization of the natural resources of specific territories. This suggestion does not, of course, mean an unrestricted immigration and settlement of Indians in those territories, irrespective of the interests of other communities, or irrespective of the economic possibilities of the regions in question. What we propose is a planned economy for the undeveloped or semi-developed territories of the Empire. Consider such a scheme without racial bias and without that illusion of maintaining permanently the paramountcy of European interests, and you will find the complex problems of harmonious relationship between Indian settlers and other communities in the Dominions and British Colonies amenable to easy solution. It is not a counsel of perfection: it is only an emphasis on the need for ready recognition of the inescapable conditions of the world to-day and of the consequential changes in outlook taking place among the coloured races. The perpetuation of the barriers—economic, social and political—on the ground of racial differences and religious affiliation is bound to evoke violent racial conflicts. Racial and colour prejudice has been too long and too deeply rooted in the imperial administrative traditions of the past; but, as *The Times* (28th Feb., 1942) says, "In the future scheme of things there is no place for the Britain of the past. She must and can offer to the world of the twentieth century something which that world needs."

VI

It is true that Great Britain is a strong citadel of imperialism and here we also witness the formidable power of the irresponsible "sovereignty of capitalism." In the second half of the nineteenth century the development of capitalism with its dependence on Colonies for supplies of raw materials gave new value, in the estimation of metropolitan powers, to their colonial possessions. The expansion of the Empire and the success of the capitalistic class in gaining control of political power are two inter-related phenomena. Therefore the strategy of group interests, consisting mainly of financiers, industrialists and rentiers, contrives to uphold all the features of capitalism and resists such developments within the Empire as are likely to affect their *status quo*. Like the tentacles of an octopus they spread out their "spheres of influence" unmindful of the material and moral disasters which necessarily result from rivalry for power and prestige.

But there exists in Great Britain an instructed minority whose sense of freedom and justice we regard as a hopeful sign of our time. Fully conscious of the inner-contradictions of the capitalist economy, it strives to show why and how the ideal of reconciling the divergent problems can be realised only if the spirit of partnership is made triumphant over that of domination. It is to this minority that we appeal, because to it belongs the task of influencing the majority in its way of evaluating the new basis of partnership with the coloured peoples.

In South Africa, where racialism has entered into the maze of party politics, and where the racial problem is kept alive through the nationalists' campaigns, there also we hear the voice of the minority who protest against the basic injustice of racial discrimination in intra-imperial relations.

Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, then the Minister of Mines and Education, visited India as a member of the South African Delegation. On his return to his country he observed in a speech at Johannesburg:

"It is an important thing for the whole world and it is an important thing for South Africa that the British Commonwealth should remain strong, united, and effective. We do not want to see a great country like India standing outside.

We want the people of India to feel that their future lies, as our future lies, within our partnership. The importance of this was appreciated in India: that we, coming from one of the Dominions, were able to give them the assurance that they could satisfy their desires and achieve their ambitions without standing aside; that they could develop in the same way that we developed; and that they could obtain their freedom and still continue to play their part in the partnership of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”¹

But the condition prerequisite to that partnership is, I repeat, India's independent political sovereignty. The failure of repeated mediations in matters affecting Indians in the Empire overseas has convinced us that she must be in a position to negotiate with the custodians of British imperialism on *equal* terms as an independent sovereign state, and thus come to regularize her status *vis-à-vis* the Dominions and Colonies through treaties. Under the New Indian Constitution of 1935, every possible precautionary measure has been taken not to allow racial discrimination against British enterprise in India; but if Indian interests continue to be sacrificed on narrow racial grounds in the Dominions and Colonies, if Indian settlers there are denied not only human consideration and common courtesy but all that is implied in the ideal of free citizenship, if statutory discrimination on the ground of race is allowed to continue, and if under the cloak of a sanctimonious attitude towards the welfare of natives, attempts are made to maintain and strengthen British dominance regardless of the imperative necessity for adjusting the rights of other immigrant communities, then there lies the parting of the ways.

¹ *The Times*, December 6th, 1937.

Chapter Two

INDIANS IN THE DOMINIONS

I

The Colonies, once administered by the Imperial Government, but which have now gained an independent sovereign status within the British Empire, are called the Dominions. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and finally Eire are the Dominions whose self-governing position was recognised and confirmed by the Statute of Westminster (1931), and their governments are entirely free from direct control by the British Parliament.

Indian emigration to the Dominions began in Natal, one of the Colonies which later came to form the Union of South Africa. When the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony (or Orange Free State) were united in 1910, the Union became the third self-governing Dominion.

The Colony of the Cape of Good Hope had become a permanent British possession nearly a century before, and some ten years later the British first settled in Natal on the east coast. Owing to rivalry between the British, Dutch and Bantu for the possession of Natal, conditions did not become settled until nearly 1850. It then became possible to develop Natal's abundant agricultural resources, and in the third quarter of the century sugar and tea were cultivated extensively. An adequate supply of labour was necessary. The native Bantu population, however, lived mainly in the highlands to the north of the colony where these crops were grown. They found their primitive tribal life quite satisfactory, and had little desire to accept wage labour. Imported labour was the only alternative.

Following the precedent of the sugar planters of Mauritius, who received a supply of Indian labourers under a system of indentures in 1834, the British settlers in Natal opened negotiations with the Government of India. The first batch of indentured labourers from India reached Natal in 1860. They were recruited

for five years at ten or twelve shillings a month and, at the end of the period, they were entitled to a free passage home or to a grant of Crown land equal in value to the free passage. It was the cheapest labour that could be made available to the sugar planters of Natal, and so profitable to the sugar industry that in 1864 a public loan of £100,000 was raised to encourage the flow of indentured labourers from India. Indeed, the conditions under which they were employed and their efficiency as farm labourers proved to be a valuable asset to the sugar plantations. By 1872 the export of sugar had risen to the value of £154,000.

Some of the main features of the indenture system should be mentioned here. Indenture is a contract enforceable by penal sanctions to serve for a term of years, usually five, in return for fixed wages. In some cases the labourer was required to agree to remain in the country for another five years after the expiry of the indentured period. It was under this form of contract that the Chinese coolies from the Portuguese settlement of Macao were recruited to the plantations of South America and Cuba. The British settlers lost no time in adopting this system immediately after the abolition of slavery. Emigration agents of the British Colonies appointed professional recruiters, who were generally very unprincipled men. They frequented the Indian villages where the crops had failed and also the pilgrim centres where thousands of illiterate and extremely poor people congregated. Here the wily and most unscrupulous recruiters cast their net and entrapped their victims, who were then brought to the recruiting depots for the so-called legal procedures. The recruiter received a gratuity of Rs.45 (£3) per head for every male and Rs.55 (£3. 13. 6) per head for every female whom he successfully enrolled as an emigrant. For the class of people to which the recruiter belonged, the temptation thus given was strong enough to inspire him to use means that were horribly cruel and utterly dishonest. A large proportion of the emigrants left India without having any knowledge of the conditions under which they would have to work in the plantations. No stipulation was made in the contract in regard to the nature of the work, and if the emigrants found the conditions intolerable they had no freedom to withdraw from the contract. The proportion of men to women among the recruits was about three to one, and this was a prolific source of social disturbance and crime. Perhaps the most objectionable feature

was that they were placed under a special law which imposed on them a criminal liability for the most trivial breaches of the contract, in place of the civil liability which usually is attached to such breaches. Indeed, the system had many characteristics of slave labour. The ignorance and helplessness of the emigrants on the one hand, and the character of the recruiting staff and the mentality of the planters on the other, made the provisions in the contract a sham. How could a contract be something real when one party was entirely or almost entirely ignorant of the nature of the work and of the environment in which he would have to live?

The conditions of transport of the human cargoes were appalling. To what depth the methods of mercantile imperialism may sink can be illustrated from the arrangements in the slave-dhows and coolie ships. Emigrants of varying age and sex were huddled together below deck in separate quarters partitioned by steel-wire. The poop-deck was reserved for women. Food supplied during the voyage was poor and inadequate, and in every shipment beri-beri, scurvy and respiratory diseases took a heavy toll among the coolies. But the human cargo from densely populated areas of India and China was plentiful; consequently the high death rate was of little concern. The coolie trade and the business of transport were both lucrative commercial adventures.

The attitude of Parliament towards the system of indentured labour was vacillating. That the practice was suspended for periods and then resumed illustrates the fact that the mind of the Government was torn between the constant wail of planters and the vigilance of that minority who took their stand upon the humanitarian standards of Administration. Soon after the passing of the *Emigration Act of 1837*, Parliament ordered an inquiry into the system. The Committee submitted a majority and a minority report. Three members out of four condemned the system in strong terms and urged its total abolition; only one member was in favour of its continuance under certain safeguards. The interests of the colonial planters prevailed nevertheless, and Parliament followed the minority report and adopted it before "a very thin House, only about 150 members being present."

The Government of India played the neutral role of a broker between the two parties, but received an annual subsidy of £10,000 from the Natal Government for facilitating recruiting arrangements favourable to a steady supply of indentured labour.

In accordance with their Emigration Acts there was an official known as the Protector of Immigrants, although in fact he could give very little real protection to the labourer. He was not an official under the Government of India, and normally belonged to the same class as the planters. In some cases the protectors themselves were planters. If a genuine protector were appointed, he would incur the displeasure of the planters and would eventually be removed from office. Further, the presence of the magistrate was not really a safeguard to the labourer against ill-treatment. Several instances of this are recorded in the Report of the Sander-son Committee, appointed by the Colonial Office, and a perusal of this shows that the safeguards provided to protect the indentured labourer from abuses were not of much practical value. They looked all right on paper. How things were as late as 1915—just about two years before the system was suspended—the reader may learn from the admirable account furnished by two great Englishmen, the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and the late Mr. W. W. Pearson, who carried on a crusade against indentured labour regardless of all the animus they were arousing.

The number of Indians sent to Natal under this system shows a steady growth as the century drew to its close. By 1911, the number had reached 140,000.

TABLE I¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Emigrant indentured labour from India</i>
1876	10,000
1880	20,000
1885	30,000
1890	33,000
1895	46,000
1900	65,000

Trouble soon arose over the system of indentures. While any attempt to declare the system illegal met with vehement protest from the sugar planters, the Government could not ignore the problems arising out of the presence of "free Indians." Should the labourers be sent back to India after the completion of the indentured period, or should the terms of their service be extended? In 1895 Lord Salisbury declared that such labourers might rest assured that after their indentures had been served they would

¹ Goodfellow, *An Economic History of South Africa*.

be, to quote his own words, "in all respects free members, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of his Majesty's subjects resident in the Colonies."

On the termination of the contract period, many labourers began to pursue either some trade or farming on a small scale, and it was this development, with its consequent results on the internal economy, that became a matter of serious concern to the Government of Natal and the European community. The growth of Indian settlement was, therefore, discouraged by a series of legislative measures. In 1891, for instance, an Act was passed prohibiting the acquisition of land by ex-indentured labourers. At the suggestion of the Colonial Office, delegates from the Government of Natal came to India to confer with the Government of India, and proposed the imposition of an annual poll tax of £25 on every *free* Indian labourer. Lord Elgin accepted the principle of poll tax, but reduced the amount to £3. (The Government of Natal passed an Act in 1895 compelling every ex-indentured labourer who proposed to settle in the colony to pay this annual tax of £3; but the imposition of the tax did not succeed in restricting the number of Indian settlers. Consequently, the Act was amended in 1903, and the tax was extended to every member of the labourer's family. "The tax was levied" writes Gandhi,¹ "not only on the labourer himself, but also upon his wife, his daughters aged 13 years or upwards, and his sons aged 16 years or upwards." The Indians protested against this iniquitous tax, submitted memorials to the authorities, and appealed to the Government of India, but the tax remained.)

It was not only the question of a settlement for the labourers free from the indenture which troubled the Government of India; there was also an influx of traders, artisans and professional men who followed them and whose claim as settlers had to be adjusted. (In 1894 the Government of Natal introduced a Bill for the purpose of disfranchising all Asiatics save those who were then enrolled in any voters' list. Gandhi was then in South Africa, having been engaged as an advocate in a case on behalf of an Indian firm. "My first contact with British authority in South Africa," writes Gandhi, "was not of a happy character. I discovered that, as a man and an Indian, I had no rights. On the contrary, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian." He

¹ *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 1928. —

explained to his countrymen how the measure would seriously affect their position in Natal, and persuaded them to submit a memorial to Lord Ripon, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. The memorial bore ten thousand signatures. Lord Ripon was a liberal and had earned the reputation of a successful Governor-General of India. He disallowed the Bill and declared "that the British Empire could not agree to the establishment of a colour bar in legislation.") If the Government of Natal had maintained the spirit behind the declaration, a great deal of trouble between South Africa and India could have been avoided. But the success of Indian opposition alarmed the Government; and the Natal Legislature, while removing racial distinction in letter, modified the Bill in such a way as to secure their main object, namely, disqualifying Indians in the exercise of the franchise; and proceeded to enact two laws, one imposing severe restrictions on Indian trade, the other on Indian immigration in Natal. The motive behind these legislative measures was accentuated by that deep-seated anti-Indian prejudice which brought to a head an acute struggle between the Government of Natal and of the other Colonies and the Indian settlers. The hostility of the European population showed itself in violent demonstrations. "A Durban mob tried to hang him (Mr. Gandhi), in the words of the song, 'to a sour apple tree'."¹)

There were few Indians in Cape Colony, and they had for some time been barred from the Orange Free State. But (those Indians who had penetrated beyond the Drakensberg into the Transvaal found that anti-Indian feeling there was just as real. They appealed to President Kruger, but he did not admit the petitioners into his house and made them stand in the courtyard! President Kruger's words of wisdom* in reply to the petition against a proposed bill for excluding Indians from the Transvaal may be quoted here. He said:

"You are the descendants of Ishmael, and therefore from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Esau. As the descendants of Esau, we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant you.")

¹ G. H. Calpin, *There are no South Africans*, 1941.

² A recent writer says that Kruger's "conduct and opinions were moulded entirely by the Bible, and by the Calvinistic interpretation of it." J. Ransom, *Racial Problems in South Africa*, 1932.

The reply was in accordance with the spirit of the Transvaal Constitution, which declared that under no circumstances should the people be prepared to permit equality between white and black, in Church and State.) The Orange Free State maintained the same policy. In comparison, the native policy of Cape Colony (and to a less extent Natal) was relatively enlightened, but it was now being brought into line with that of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State by the colour bar and segregation policy which General Hertzog's Government later followed in earnest.

(Under the Act 3 of 1885, passed by the Transvaal Volksraad, every Indian trader was required to register at a cost of £25, and no Indians could have the rights of citizenship; nor could they own property. Their places of residence were confined to "ghettos." It should be noted that the British Government objected to the law as being a contravention of the treaty between the Boers and the British, under which the rights of British subjects were secured. But the Volksraad did not consider Indians as being British subjects! For Indians to declare their British citizenship before the Transvaal Government was only to invite ridicule.)

The Law was amended in 1886, reducing the registration fee from £25 to £3 and segregating Indians to certain fixed locations in towns. Although the amended Act permitted ownership of fixed property by Indians within these areas, in actual practice the ownership had to be acquired through European nominees, and for this purpose the device of special companies was resorted to. The Dealers' Licenses Act, another instance of class legislation, was passed in Natal in order to prevent Indian merchants opening shops in the principal streets. The arguments put forward in support of the various restrictive measures adopted by Municipalities were both foolish and mischievous. One petition to the Executive against the Indians alluded to "the dangers to which the whole community is exposed by the spread of leprosy, syphilis and the like loathsome diseases, engendered by the filthy habits and immoral practices of these people." Another memorial observed that "as these men enter the Orange Free State without wives or female relatives the result is obvious. Their religion teaches them to consider all women as soulless and Christians as natural prey." The real ground for this vulgar agitation was trade jealousy, as stated in a petition sent to the Colonial Office by

1,340 Englishmen. The main purpose of all the restrictive measures was to get rid of Indian labourers at the end of their indenture.

The situation in the Cape Colony, the oldest settlement in South Africa, was not so affected by colour prejudice; but its Government did not lose any time in following in the footsteps of Natal and the Transvaal, by passing the Immigration Restriction Act and also by introducing a licensing system for Indian traders.

Apart, however, from these legislative measures against the Indians, the general attitude of the Europeans towards them was not only hostile but insulting. "The Indian who had served and made the sugar industry," writes Mr. G. H. Calpin, "became a pest, a constant irritant to the European, not only because of his commercial competition but also because . . . he was an alien, a coloured alien at that. Worse than being an irritant to the flesh, he was an aggravation to the mind. His presence, as the lowly representative of a civilization more ancient and no whit inferior to western civilization, denied the prerogative of the European—the Divine Right of White Skin—consciously approved by the Dutch, and long since assumed by the British."¹ To the Europeans, the Indians, be they traders or lawyers, were all "coolies," and consequently the treatment accorded to every Indian was characterised by a contemptuous attitude which often found expression in insults and assaults. We cite here one instance from the personal experience of the late Rev. C. F. Andrews. "In South Africa," writes this genuine friend of India, "I was with Mahatma Gandhi's son Ramdas. One evening we were in Johannesburg station waiting for the Durban Mail. When it came in, Ramdas went into the compartment to put my handbag on my seat. First of all a young English lad caught hold of Ramdas and would have beaten him if I had not prevented him; and then the European conductor was about to assault him, and I had to stop him also. . . . This insult was offered simply because Ramdas was an Indian. This carriage was a 'European quarter'."

While the Indians in South Africa were carrying on organised protests against the measure that placed them in such a humiliating position, their leader Gandhi came to India in 1896 to lay their case before the Indian National Congress. At a meeting, the Hon'ble Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a brilliant Indian statesman, said: "Our friend, Mr. Gandhi, has come here on a brief visit from

¹ G. H. Calpin, *There are no South Africans* 1941.

South Africa and he is telling us how our people are treated in Natal and Cape Colony and the Transvaal, how they are not allowed to walk on footpaths or travel in first class carriages on the railway, how they are not admitted into hotels, and so forth." So far the treatment of the Indians in South Africa had not been in the news. Public opinion in India was not aware either of the conditions to which the Indian indentured labourers were subjected, or of the strong anti-Indian feeling prevailing in South Africa, until Gandhi went there and organised passive resistance to the evils which were revealed to him. The Government of India had hitherto put their trust in the Colonial Governments for the fair treatment of indentured labour, and from time to time amended and consolidated the emigration law in order to make recruitment much easier. As there was no force of Indian opinion behind these legislative measures, no attention was given to the problems of ameliorating the labour conditions of Indians overseas. Nothing was done to remove the humiliating restrictions imposed on them, and things were allowed to drift until the circumstances of hardship and oppression gave rise to a bitter struggle.

II

The history of the struggle in South Africa is faithfully recorded by Gandhi himself.¹ In 1893 he accepted a brief for an important suit between two wealthy Indian merchants in Durban and Pretoria. There he received most insulting treatment from the Europeans. Once he was pushed out of the train by a police constable at Maritzburg and was beaten on his way to Pretoria. It was a shock to his deep religious emotion to find that the Christian churches were also being contaminated by the racial antagonism. Once he was refused admission in a church in the front of which there was a board announcing—"No Asiatics or Natives allowed." Day after day he saw how his countrymen were treated by even responsible men in South Africa. Just when he was preparing to return to India, the Bill for disfranchising Indians was introduced in the Natal Legislative Assembly, and he decided to stay on and resist the measure on behalf of the Indians, who had become almost demoralised by the life they had to live in an atmosphere of racial hatred. But he realised that

¹ *Satyagraha in South Africa*, M. K. Gandhi, 1928.

Indian public opinion would have to be roused in India in order to force the Imperial Government to act. On his return to India in 1896, he laid bare the circumstances of Indian life in Natal and the Transvaal, through the press and platform. The publicity given to his graphic description of the indentured system of labour alarmed the European planters in South Africa as well as in the Colonies, and the stage was prepared for a bitter struggle between the Governments concerned and the instructed Indian public. The Indians insisted that the Government of India should not tolerate racial discrimination, and that the conditions of Indian immigrants in South Africa and other parts of the British Empire should be improved. The attitude of the Europeans of Natal was stiffened by Gandhi's propaganda in India, and they were determined to prevent his return to South Africa. They took the law into their own hands when Gandhi reached Durban. What ugly incidents followed we need not relate here. It is important for us to remember that in this struggle, some of the best minds of Great Britain lent their moral support to the cause of the Indians.

In the midst of it all came the Boer War. The Indians under the leadership of Gandhi rendered valuable service in an ambulance corps as a challenge to those who believed that the Indians claimed only the privileges of British citizenship but would not take the responsibilities which such claims involved. It was hoped that the Indian problem would receive sympathetic consideration from the Government of the Colony after the war; but it reappeared in a most acute form. With the establishment of British rule, it became necessary to revise the existing laws of the country with a view to removing such Acts as would prejudicially affect British interests. Thus the anti-Asiatic laws came to be re-examined, and it was considered necessary to make these laws rigid.

In 1906, an Ordinance called the Asiatic Law Amendment was passed by the South African Legislative Council, the object of which was to confine entry into the Transvaal to pre-war Indian residents of all classes and to compel them to register themselves "with the great humiliation attending such registration." Every Indian, male or female, rich or poor, the coolie or the merchant, above the age of eight was required to obtain a certificate of registration which the holder was to carry on his person, so that police officers might inspect it whenever they wished to do so.

Even in the case of literate Indians, the Registrar was to take all finger and thumb impressions. In other words, the treatment accorded to the Indians was similar to that of a convict released on license in England. The main purpose of this Ordinance was to get rid of *free* Indians. A further device to prevent Indians entering the Transvaal took the form of a European language test! It was clear that the question of indentured Indian labour was developing into a bitter racial antagonism. It raised a storm of protest from the Indian community. At a public meeting, held in Johannesburg under Gandhi's chairmanship, an old Mohammedan merchant, Haji Habib, declared that in the name of Allah (God) he would never submit to the humiliation imposed on him by the Ordinance and called upon his countrymen to take an oath to that effect. "If any officer proceeds to take my wife's finger-prints, I warn you," so cried this gallant patriot at an interview with the Colonial Secretary to the Government of the Transvaal, "I shall not be able to restrain myself. I shall kill him there and then and die myself." The Indians assembled at the meeting swore before God that they would be prepared to resist in every possible manner the "Black" Ordinance, and Gandhi was entrusted with the responsibilities of the leadership of their struggle against this measure. Thus began the first phase of the movement known as *Satyagraha*.

The Transvaal British Indian Association decided to appeal to the Imperial Government and sent Gandhi and Mr. H. O. Ali, the founder of the Hamidia Islamic Association in the Transvaal, as their delegates to the deputation which waited on Lord Elgin, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. Leading Indians in India had faith in Mr. John (later Lord) Morley, who was at that time Secretary of State for India, and believed that he would do his utmost to make certain that the just grievances of the Indians in South Africa would be redressed. At any rate, a great wave of agitation was then passing over India, and the Imperial Government did not wish to do anything that might aggravate the situation.

The deputation was introduced by Sir Lepel Griffin, and the following extract of his speech taken from a verbatim official report shows that morally and logically the Indians had a very strong case. Sir Lepel said:

" . . . During the Boer Government, the British Indians were treated with considerable harshness, but their immi-

gration into the Transvaal was not prohibited, and with the exception of a fee for licence for adult traders, they were not interfered with. But their position was an exceedingly uncomfortable one, and many protests were raised, which, we understood, when the country fell into the hands of the English, would be redressed. So far from being redressed, their position is made worse, and the rules for registration and identification were made exceedingly more rigorous. The Ordinance, which has now been passed, makes, whatever people in South Africa may choose to say, their position infinitely worse and more degrading. It may be said that, in the Transvaal, these rules are for the benefit of the Indians, but the toad under the harrow knows where the harrow grips him, and the Indians in the Transvaal consider that the new regulations of this Ordinance are a grievance and an insult which is almost too grievous to be borne; and I for one most strongly support their claim and their protest. Under this Ordinance, every one in the Transvaal is exposed to the most rigorous investigation; the impressions of his fingers are to be recorded on every pass; no one is allowed in, man, woman, or child, without registration of so rigorous a character, that it has been unheard of in any civilized country within recollection. Under this regulation every Indian in the Transvaal, whether an adult male, woman, or whether a child, and even babes in arms, will be obliged to be registered under such conditions as only ordinarily apply to convicts in a civilized country; and evasion, or ignorance, or even forgetfulness on this point is punished by crushing fines, by imprisonment with hard labour, by expulsion, and by ruin. You, my Lord, who have been Viceroy of India, and whose sympathy is with the country, must know that legislation of this sort is unheard of under the British Flag; indeed, today, in Europe I may say, without any exaggeration, that with the exception of the Russian legislation against the Jews, there is no legislation comparable to this on the Continent of Europe; and in England, if we wanted a similar case, we should have to go back to the time of the Plantagenets. And against whom is this legislation directed? Against the most orderly, honourable, industrious, temperate race in the world, people of our own stock and blood, with whom our

language has, as a sister language, been connected. . . . And by whom is this legislation instigated? It does not come from the English. The legislation is prompted, and the prejudice against the Indians is encouraged, by the aliens, by Russian Jews, by Syrians, by German Jews, by every class of aliens, the very offscourings of the international sewers of Europe."

Gandhi's statement in the deputation was characteristic of his determination to fight to the end rather than submit to the intolerable degradation involved in the principle of the Ordinance. Lord Elgin promised to give the matter his best consideration, but it was about this time that there was to be a change in the constitutional position of the Transvaal. Although the Royal Assent was withheld from the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, a newly formed South African Government passed the same Ordinance in a new form in 1907 and it received Royal Sanction on the plea that South Africa was then no longer a Crown Colony.¹ The situation created by this reversal of the Imperial Government's attitude was regrettable. It was considered by the Indians as an example of a broken pledge; Gandhi described it as crooked, and was determined not to take such treatment lying down. Over 8,000 Indians in South Africa prepared themselves for resisting the Transvaal Immigration Laws. The conflict led to imprisonment, insults, bitterness, strikes and a host of other incidents that shattered India's faith in the justice of the Imperial Government.

Let us recount here some of the incidents of the *Satyagraha* movement inaugurated on the very day—1st July, 1907—when the Act, hurriedly passed by the new Transvaal Legislature, was to come into operation. The Registration Office of the Asiatic Department became the storm centre of the movement. The Indian volunteers stood outside the office and dissuaded their compatriots from yielding to the pressure brought to bear upon them by the Government to register. After several days, about five hundred names only were registered, out of an estimated population of thirteen thousand Indians. The prestige of the Government was at stake, and it decided to arrest the leaders. For their refusal to register, they were ordered to leave the Transvaal; this demand was promptly disobeyed. The only course then left to the Government was to imprison them for periods of hard labour. But the

¹ The Transvaal received responsible Government on 1st January, 1907.

methods of incarceration adopted by the Government failed to demoralise the spirit of this passive resistance movement. On the contrary, as the result of such actions, the movement was achieving its object. It evoked a great deal of sympathy among a section of the British and Boer public, and there was a general demand for a compromise. It must be said to the credit of a British journalist, the editor of the *Johannesburg Leader*, that he took the initiative in persuading the Government to bring about an early settlement of the situation. Through his intervention, General Smuts proposed a compromise, the substance of which was that the Indians should register voluntarily, and not under any law; and, if the majority of Indians underwent voluntary registration, the Government would repeal the Act and legalise the voluntary registration. Gandhi agreed to the terms and persuaded his countrymen to register voluntarily on the plea that the "Black" Act would be repealed.

Gandhi and other Indian leaders were released, but they found a large number of Indians suspicious of the Government's motives. Gandhi explained to them the underlying principle of *Satyagraha* (Defence of Truth)¹. He said: "Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the *satyagrahi* (he who practises *Satyagraha*) is ready to trust him for the twenty-first time; for an implicit trust in human nature is his creed." But the Pathans of the Transvaal—that hardy and war-like race of the North-Western Provinces in India—were not to be moved by such a creed. They wanted to get rid of Gandhi, and on his way to the Registration Office he was badly assaulted by them.

The tragedy of the story is that the subsequent events proved that the Pathans were right in their conviction that the policy of the Government in regard to registration of the Indians would remain unaltered. Unfortunately, General Smuts could not give effect to his pledge, and introduced fresh legislation "validating the voluntary registrations effected and the certificates issued subsequent to the date fixed by the Government in terms of the Asiatic Act, taking the holders of the voluntary registration certificates out of its operation, and making further provision for the registration of Asiatics."² In other words, the "Black" Act was to

¹ The meaning of *Satyagraha* can be best understood by the true Christian if it is called "the method of the Cross."

² *Mahatma Gandhi: His own Story*, 1934. (Allen & Unwin).

remain on the Statute Book, and the system of registration was to be followed in the manner desired by public opinion. The truth is that General Smuts could not pursue a course of action contrary to that demanded by General Botha when both the statesmen were planning the Union of South Africa.

Under the circumstances, Gandhi had no other alternative than the declaration of starting the *Satyagraha* movement with renewed vigour. He informed General Smuts that he had not fulfilled the terms of settlement by repealing the Asiatic Act, and that unless it were done within a specified period of time, he would call upon every registered Indian to burn his certificate. In reply to this "ultimatum," General Smuts said in the Legislature: "The people who have offered such a threat to the Government have no idea of its power. I am sorry that some agitators are trying to inflame poor Indians who will be ruined if they succumb to their blandishments."

However, the struggle began afresh, and over 2,500 certificates were publicly burnt on the 16th August, 1908, at a meeting held in Johannesburg. An enormous cauldron was placed on the platform and the certificates were burnt amidst intense enthusiasm. The Pathans were delighted with the demonstration and took the opportunity of asking Gandhi's forgiveness for the assault.

The incident of burning the certificates inflamed the minds of the "conventional imperialists," and the Government of the Transvaal decided to take steps for restricting immigration of Indians and other Asiatic races. No time was lost, therefore, in passing the Transvaal Immigrants' Restriction Bill. Gandhi realised that the fight was going to be a protracted one, and that it would be necessary to train a band of leaders thoroughly imbued with, and disciplined in the cult of passive resistance.

All classes of Indians responded to the call to defy both the Asiatic Bill and the new Immigrants' Restriction Bill. Since imprisonment had not been effective in the past, the Government decided to arrest the Indians who defied the laws and to deport them to Natal, Portuguese East Africa and to Madras. After serving a term of imprisonment in Pretoria gaol, Gandhi started to organise a deputation to England in the hope that the Liberal Government, which was then in power, might help him to secure justice from the Government of the Transvaal. General Botha, who was then in London in connection with the proposal for the

Union of South Africa, refused to repeal the two Acts against which Gandhi had directed his passive resistance. General Smuts gave a straight-forward reason for the Bills, telling Lord Crewe, then the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that he was not prepared to admit even the theoretical equality of the Asiatics with the white people. In the face of such strong opposition from the South African leaders, Gandhi's mission in London received nothing more than words of courtesy even from the Liberal Secretary of State for India. The Imperial Government was then primarily concerned with the creation of the Union of South Africa.

Gandhi returned to his field of action. Meanwhile, Indian public opinion became extremely agitated over the treatment of Indians in South Africa. The entire educated community in India felt deep sympathy for their countrymen who were being exposed to humiliation and injustice. While the situation supplied additional fuel to the ardour of the extreme nationalists for revolt against the British connection, the liberal Indian politicians sought the remedy in constitutional agitation.

While Gandhi was preparing to resume the struggle in South Africa with renewed vigour, the Hon'ble Gopal Krishna Gokhale was preparing the mind of the Government of India to take a bold stand against the invidious and unjust treatment accorded to Indians who should be regarded as free citizens of the British Empire. At his request, two Englishmen visited South Africa to play their part as apostles of peace. The services which the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and the late Mr. W. W. Pearson rendered to the Indian communities there in their efforts to secure justice from the Governments of the Colonies evoked generous recognition from all sections of the Indian peoples. "If you go to Johannesburg, to Cape Town, anywhere, you will find," declared Shrimati Sarojini Devi, Indian poetess, "that C. F. Andrews has a place in the hearts of that downtrodden race in South Africa, and that he has brought to that race, disinherited of all its human rights, perhaps the first realization of the reality of the Sermon which was preached on the Mount of Olives."

III

The National Congress took up the cause in earnest; the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association was founded in Bombay.

and Gokhale brought the matter before the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910. Since the racial question had risen from the pernicious system of indentured labour, he moved a resolution for the prohibition of recruitment for the colony of Natal. His proposal was carried into effect in 1911. The Morley-Minto Reforms had just been introduced and the Government did not forget Morley's dictum: "Rally the moderates." Besides, the action of the Government of Natal embarrassed the Government of India, and they were persuaded to accept the resolution "as a measure of retaliation rendered necessary by the continued indignities and ill-treatment to which Indians were subjected." They wrote to the Secretary of State for India in the following terms:

"... It is needless to draw your Lordship's attention to the serious crisis with which we are now faced in, at any rate, one portion of the Empire, owing to the methods of self-governing colonies in dealing with the status and rights of British Indians whom they had allowed, if not actually encouraged, to settle within their borders. It is impossible for us to disregard the fact that the history of the anti-Asiatic Legislation in Natal and the Transvaal may at any time be repeated in others of the Crown Colonies . . . "

Two years later, when the facts in regard to the indentured labour in British Guiana, Fiji and Jamaica came to be known in greater detail, Gokhale appealed to the Government for total prohibition of the system, which he rightly characterised as "a monstrous system, iniquitous in itself, based on fraud and maintained by force, a system so wholly opposed to modern sentiments of justice and humanity as to be a grave blot on the civilization of any country which dares to tolerate it." The Government of India were unable to accept his resolution on the ground that the immediate effect of prohibition on the districts from which the emigrants were mainly drawn would greatly handicap the colonial planters and that the Colonial Office would not welcome it. Besides, the Colonial Office, through its Committee of Enquiry, came to the conclusion that the system afforded much economic and material benefit to the Indian coolies and that it should be maintained in their interest, and that the Indian educated opinion desired its prohibition only because it injured free Indians in the Colonies. In any case, the action of the Government of India gave

us reason to believe the truth of Curzon's description that the Indian Government was only "a subordinate branch of the British Government."

However, under the pressure of public opinion, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, sent a special deputation¹ to the Colonies concerned, for a thorough investigation into the working of the indentured labour system. This *official* enquiry confined its investigations almost entirely to the economic aspects of the question and ignored the social and moral evils in the system as pursued in Fiji. Strangely enough, the indenture system itself was not mentioned in principle, and only details, such as the commutation of services by those time-expired Indian labourers who desired to settle down as farmers, were mentioned. Apart from recommending the elimination of certain conspicuous defects in the provision of medical facilities, the report stated that "a careful study of facts will result in the conclusion that its (the existing system) advantages have far outweighed its disadvantages." The report of the deputation, however, furnished fresh material for a renewed agitation against the system.

Meanwhile, at the behest of Indian public opinion, the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and the late Mr. W. W. Pearson went to Fiji in 1916. It is from their report² that we are able to get a true picture of the appalling conditions of labour inherent in the indenture system. Deliberate dishonesty in recruiting, wages fixed at the low sum of a shilling a day in a period of rising prices, filthy environment of coolie "lines," and the lack of medical and educational facilities for Indian population—all these are clearly pointed out in their report. They showed that the inordinately high suicide-rate and the large number of serious crimes committed by the Indians were the outcome of the indenture system. Nor was there any doubt about the fact that the death-rate among indentured labourers was twice as high as amongst the unindentured.

Soon after the publication of their report, the matter was brought to the Imperial Legislative Council during the first World War. In view of the political situation in India, it was considered expedient to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards this.

¹ The deputation consisted of MacNeill, a member of the Indian Civil Service, and Mr. Chimmanlal, an Indian gentleman from the United Provinces, whence came the bulk of the immigrants. Cmd. 7745, 1915.

² *Indentured Labour in Fiji: An independent Inquiry*, by C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson (1916).

question, and Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, announced his intention of terminating the system as soon as possible. In a sympathetic speech, his Excellency observed:

"No one, who knows anything of the Indian sentiment, can remain ignorant of the deep and genuine disgust to which the continuance of the indentured system has given rise. . . . This is soon to be removed for ever."

Lord Hardinge admitted that the coolie did not stand to gain very much financially by emigration and that indentured emigration to the Colonies was not, from the point of view of India as a whole, "an important safety-valve for congested districts in India." As regards the conditions under which the indentured coolie had perforce to live, he said:

"Here the Government of India for the first time received full information of certain details which showed that there must be something very wrong indeed with the conditions under which these men are living. The death rate among indentured coolies has been decidedly high in some colonies. . . . The figures (for suicides) were truly startling. The average rate of suicides per million of all ages were 45 in Madras and 63 in the United Provinces.¹ . . . But in the Colonies we find the following figures for suicides per million.

TABLE II

<i>Colony</i>	<i>Free Population</i>	<i>Indentured Labour</i>
British Guiana	52	100
Trinidad	134	400
Fiji	147	926

I do not think we have to seek very far for the cause of the state of things which these figures reveal. . . . Such sordid and miserable conditions may well predispose an unhappy man to suicide."

Thus spoke the Viceroy after the British Government had allowed the system to continue over seventy-five years. They had recognised the evils of the system, but had taken no steps towards

¹ Madras and the United Provinces were the two main Indian Provinces from which emigrants were largely drawn.

its abolition until a bitter agitation widened the gap between Indians and their fellow citizens of the British Empire. Indentured labour from India was stopped in March 1917, and finally abolished in 1920.

. IV

Let me now revert to the story of the Indian struggle in South Africa. The movement led by Gandhi gained a substantial momentum from the support it received from India. Within a short time an army of passive resisters were ready to violate those laws which humiliated them, with full knowledge of the penalties involved. Instead of adopting a policy of conciliation, the Union of South Africa took to coercion and continued to subject the Indians to measures which served to churn up racial hatred. Before entering upon a fresh struggle, Gandhi invited the Hon'ble Gopal Krishna Gokhale to acquaint himself with the facts of the situation by a personal investigation. That sagacious statesman, who stood for the highest ideal of partnership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, readily accepted the invitation and came to South Africa. After an extensive tour throughout the Union, he realised that, besides the two unfair laws of the Transvaal Legislature, namely, the Asiatic Registration Act and the Immigration Restriction Act, there was also the £3 poll tax on indentured labourers in Natal which had become a perennial source of discontent among the Indians in the Union. He interviewed the Ministers of the Union Government and tried his utmost to reason with the European community; he pointed out the grave danger to the Empire if they failed to foresee the possible consequences of fostering within the Union persistent germs of revolt; and he appealed to the sense of justice of the statesmen for the repeal of the measures which were evoking throughout India nothing but contempt and indignation.

The Ministers assured him that the racial bar would soon be removed and that the £3 tax would also be abolished. But the Europeans in Natal, already sensitive at the abolition of indentured labour from India, objected to the repeal of the tax, and General Smuts could not persuade the four colonies to agree to the withdrawal of protective measures provided for in the Asiatic Bills.

At this juncture, fresh trouble broke out in consequence of a judgment of the Cape Supreme Court, relating to the validity of marriages in South Africa. It was held by Mr. Justice Searle that all marriages in South Africa that had not been solemnised by Christian rites and registered by the Official Registrar of marriages, were null and void. Thus, in the eyes of the law of the Union, the wives of Hindus, Mohammedans and Parsis were nothing more than concubines! Gandhi protested against the Searle judgment, but the Government took no steps to modify it so as to confer validity upon marriages solemnised in accordance with other religious rites.

However, the situation offered an admirable opportunity for the inclusion of Indian women in the *Satyagraha* movement. A large number of women, under the leadership of Shreemati Kasturbai, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi, came out to demonstrate their protest by defying the Immigrants' Restriction Bill. The Government retaliated by adopting coercive measures showing unswerving firmness in repressing disorder; but they forgot that unswerving firmness in redressing injustice was also a government's duty.

The treatment meted out to women *Satyagrahi* inflamed the Indian miners, who immediately organised strikes. Gandhi became apprehensive of disturbances and violence, and promptly joined the strikers in order to persuade them to follow the *Satyagraha* methods in their conduct. About two thousand Indians, men and women, assembled to march into the Transvaal. "It is one of the chief epics of South African history," writes Mr. Glorney Bolton. "Weary and footsore, two thousand men and women arrive at the frontier and push past the little police cordon that was to ward them off. Two women take their babies with them on the march. One dies from exposure. The other falls from its mother's arms as she is crossing a brook and is drowned. But the mothers console each other. . . . Night falls. The marchers are silent and falling asleep. An Englishman with a lantern in his hand approaches Mr. Gandhi. 'I have a warrant for your arrest,' he says. The leader slips noiselessly away. There are others to take his place."

The reader need not be detained with an account of the hardships endured by the Indians who had taken part in this widespread agitation; but I would like to relate one instance of a little

girl of sixteen years of age who was imprisoned in Maritzburg gaol, in order to impress on the reader the spirit that pervaded this movement of passive resistance. The girl returned from prison with a fatal fever to which she succumbed within a few days of her release. And this was the conversation she had with Gandhi before her death:

Gandhi: "Valliamma, you do not repent of your having gone to gaol?"

Girl: "Repent? I am even now ready to go to gaol again if I am arrested." *Balls*

Gandhi: "What if it results in your death?"

Girl: "I do not mind it. Who would not love to die for one's motherland?"

It soon became evident that the repressive measures were futile against such a unique form of mass action. The outbreak of passive resistance was followed by strikes in Natal, and the policy adopted by the Government was given the widest publicity in India and elsewhere.

When affairs took a very serious turn, Lord Hardinge expressed his righteous indignation at the manner in which the situation was being handled by the Union Government. We should remember that the immigration problem had now become the concern of the central government, and that the Immigrants' Regulation Act of 1913, embodying all the main features of restrictive measures hitherto adopted by various provincial governments, was sponsored by the Union. His Excellency said: "I do feel that if the South African Government desire to justify themselves in the eyes of India and the world only one course is open to them, and that is to appoint a strong and impartial committee, upon which Indian interests shall be fully represented, to conduct a thorough and searching enquiry into the truth of these allegations." Commenting upon a categorical denial from the Union Government, Lord Hardinge remarked that even their denials contained admissions which did not seem to him to indicate that the Government had exercised a very wise discretion in some of the steps which they had adopted.

But the attitude of the Union Government was consistently opposed to any interference in their internal affairs which might

weaken their position as a self-governing unit of the Empire. Mr. Fischer, the minister in charge of the Bill of 1913, declared that all conditions of imperial citizenship were a good, laudable wish, but "they would be fools if they allowed that laudable ambition to be realised. . . . Let them be honest about it. One race would have to be the master, and they who were masters at present had better remain masters."

Much resentment was expressed in the Union at the outspoken protests of Lord Hardinge. However, General Smuts agreed to appoint a special commission, which reported in March, 1914. The Government of India sent a special officer to lay their point of view before the Commission, and the late Rev. C. F. Andrews was there to act as a mediator between Gandhi and the authorities.

The Commission recognised the fact that "indentured Indians had been brought to South Africa to serve her needs, and that for better or worse the majority had come to stay," and declared that "in the interests of good government it was desirable to remove as far as possible any causes of irritation." It recommended the repeal of the £3 annual license tax, and legal recognition of marriages performed according to the rites of Hinduism, Islam and other religious faiths. It was also recommended that Indians, after registering one wife, should not be debarred in any way from contracting other marriages according to their own religious rites. But such marriages could not be accorded any form of legal recognition. The Commission dealt with some minor grievances in regard to certain provisions of the Immigrants' Restriction Act, and attempted to meet most of the demands of the Indian community in a spirit of compromise. All these recommendations of the Commission were implemented in the Indians' Relief Act (1914), but it should be noted that legislation against Indians was allowed to remain on the Statute Book! However, an agreement between General Smuts and Mr. Gandhi brought to an end the struggle that had begun eight years before. The conflict left a woeful tale of suffering, the sting of which was mitigated by the recollection of the devoted service of several of "God's Englishmen" who stood by the Indians and did all they could to repair the torn tissues of fellowship between the two races. But the virus of racial feeling is infectious, as we shall see in a situation which arose just about the time when this phase of the South African struggle came to an end though in the nature of a truce.

V

Following the example of South Africa, the Canadian Government launched a campaign for similar restrictions to Asiatic immigration. The immigration from India began in 1905, when only 45 Indians, mostly Sikhs, were admitted into Canada; but these hardy men from the Punjab proved themselves to be useful immigrants, and consequently within a few years their number rose to nearly five thousand. The Sikhs are enterprising, adventurous and law-abiding. Nevertheless, the Government of Canada, alarmed at this increase, proceeded to adopt a highly restrictive policy and practically bolted the door. The press took up the matter up with zeal, and *The Citizen*, an influential Ottawa journal, observed: "As Canada already contains 2,900 Chinese, 12,000 Japanese, 18,000 Negroes and 2,500 Hindus, it is impossible any longer to call Canada a white man's country." The Saskatchewan Supreme Court upheld the right of the provinces to legislate against the employment of white girls by Orientals; the British Columbia fruit-growers and truck farmers passed a resolution forbidding any local fruit-sellers to sell fruits grown by Orientals; and, finally, the Commission on Labour of the Province recommended the total exclusion of all Asiatic races from British Columbia. Thus, the anti-Asiatic feeling prepared the ground for the "white policy" of Canada.

But, owing to the Imperial relations involved in the Hindu Immigration question, the Imperial Government felt uneasy. In a debate in the House of Lords (30th July, 1913) Lord Ampthill said: "For ten years Indians had been waiting for the justice which the British Government was bound to secure for them and which British statesmen had again and again pledged themselves to secure. One of the main causes of the South African War consisted in the grievances of our fellow-subjects in the Transvaal." His Lordship was followed by Lord Sydenham, who hit upon the precise point where Indian opinion seemed so confused. He said that it was not easy to explain to Indians how it was that we could not obtain as much consideration for some of the subjects of the Empire in our Dominions as in foreign countries.

Undeterred by such sentiments or unmindful of the consequences of enacting various discriminative measures against Indians, the Government of Canada had meanwhile passed the

Immigration Act of 1910. The Act embodied the main features of Orders-in-council passed in 1908. The Indians were required to possess at the time of landing in Canada the sum of \$200 as against \$25 required of other Asiatics, except those under the regulations of a special statute or treaty. With the full knowledge that an unbroken journey from India to Canada could not be accomplished, the Act stipulated that "any immigrants who came to Canada otherwise than by continuous journey may be excluded." In 1913, an Order-in-Council was passed prohibiting the landing at the different ports in British Columbia of any Indian immigrants who were artisans, skilled or unskilled labourers. These and other restrictions gave rise to grievances among the Indian community in Canada, and they sought the aid of their countrymen in bringing pressure upon the Imperial Government. The Sikh immigrants complained that relations between them and the people of British Columbia had become so strained that it would develop into a bitter struggle such as that in South Africa. They pointed out that the stipulations in the Immigration Law were designed to prohibit the entry of their countrymen into Canada.

The Imperial Government, however, took no steps to redress their grievances. Since, as already mentioned, no one would be allowed to land in British Columbia from India who had not completed a direct passage by a single steamer all the way from Calcutta, the Sikh community in India decided to make a test case.

At the suggestion of the Indians in Canada, a few Sikh leaders organised a voyage and chartered a ship in the hope of circumventing the British Columbia law in regard to Asiatic immigration. They failed to secure a ship in Calcutta, but succeeded in chartering one from Hong Kong. With 352 Sikhs and 21 Punjabis, the Japanese steamer *Komagata Maru* sailed from Hong Kong on 4th April, 1914, for Vancouver. The purpose of the expedition was to assert the contention that all British subjects have equal rights to migrate from one part of the Empire to another, "unless they are of a class likely to become a public charge in that country to which they go." Most of the emigrants were skilled artisans and labourers, but they were refused admission to Canada. Thus, the hope that the Imperial Government would secure their admission once they arrived at the Canadian port was frustrated.

The approach of the steamer to the Canadian shores was signalled to the Canadian Navy, and a battleship pursued it on its course. On the 24th May, 1914, the steamer anchored at Vancouver, but none but a few with a return permit were allowed to land. The emigrants revolted and attempted a forced landing, which called for intervention by the military authorities. The leaders of the expedition protested against the action of the Canadian Government, and one of them applied for a writ of *habeas corpus*, which was disallowed by the Chief Justice.

The Times (9th June, 1914) commented upon the episode as follows:

“Evidence of the intense feeling of the people of the Dominions upon the Asiatic question accumulates almost daily. Canada is being compelled to face it at this moment in its most aggressive form. Incidents in Australia and in New Zealand constantly reveal the apprehension with which it inspires them. In early May, General Sir Ian Hamilton made a speech at Auckland and said that ‘it may be decided whether Europeans or Asiatics are to decide the destinies of the world’.”

But let us trace the destiny of these returned emigrants. When the ship arrived near Calcutta on the 27th September, 1914, they were in an ugly mood and disposed to blame the Government of India for all their misfortunes and humiliations. To them, as the Committee of Enquiry stated, there is no distinction between the Government of the United Kingdom, that of Canada and that of British India, or that of any British Colony. They understand that all these authorities are under the Imperial Government of which His Majesty the King-Emperor is the supreme head. Naturally they were in a rebellious spirit which unfortunately led to a clash with the police.

Just over six weeks earlier the war had broken out, and the Government was armed with various Ordinances which empowered them to take adequate precautions against internal disorders. Consequently they refused to allow any public demonstration attempted by the *Komagata Maru* passengers. A riot ensued with loss of life on both sides. Eighteen Sikhs were killed and thirty-one were put in prison, and the rest returned to their homes in the Punjab to tell the tale of their woes. The upshot of this

British Columbian anti-Asiatic legislation was the spread of the anti-British feeling in thousands of homes in the Punjab. Among some Sikhs the conviction had sunk deep in their minds that the Government were biased against them, notwithstanding their loyalty. Years later I heard a Sikh officer in Rawalpindi recalling the *Komagata Maru* incidents. He remarked that, although thousands of Sikh soldiers fought bravely and laid down their lives in the first World War, they were still regarded as *pariahs* (untouchables) in the Empire. Indeed, this incident was fruitful in making revolutionaries in India, but not in making our rulers realise that inter-racial hostility within the Empire cannot continue without injuring the relationship between India and its other constituent parts. Soon after this affair in Vancouver, a band of Sikh settlers in Canada returned to India and took part, as revealed in the Lahore Conspiracy case of 1915, in spreading the spirit of revolt in the Punjab.

We now turn to the position of Indians in two other Dominions, namely, Australia and New Zealand. The beginning of emigration of indentured labour from India to Australia dates from 1837-38, but owing to the limited scope of its employment in a country where only a partial fringe round the coastline of over 12,000 miles was settled, the influx of indentured immigrants was not of any great magnitude. The sugar plantations of Queensland had the Kanakas from South Sea islands imported into the country as indentured labourers. In 1841 an official Committee considered the situation that would result from the introduction of Asiatic labour and rejected the proposal of the sugar planters on the ground that the indentured system savoured too much of a perpetuation of the slavery which had been abolished in other parts of the Empire. Nevertheless, a very large number of Indians from the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab and Baluchistan had migrated to Western Australia as free men and contributed to the economic development of the country. Most of them were primary producers, and some took part in the development of transport.

But the necessity for anti-Asiatic measures arose in connection with the working of gold mines. In 1878 Queensland passed an Act prohibiting the employment of Asiatics in mines and subsequently both Indians and Chinese immigrants were excluded from the sugar and banana industries.

At the beginning of the century, the Asiatic population in Australia, predominantly Chinese, numbered over 45,000, and it was this influx of alien elements which was regarded as a menace. On the formation of the Australian Commonwealth, the Federal Government passed the Immigration Act of 1901, with a view to restricting the entry of Asiatics. Unmindful of the economic consequences of making a tropical Asiatic sub-continent the white man's special reserve, they sought to free even the primary industries from the employment of alien labour. The Kanakas from South Sea islands were speedily repatriated, and the indentured labour was officially abolished. Those who desired to land in Australia were required to go through a dictation test in any language which might be prescribed—a condition not, however, imposed upon persons of European race.

Since the application of this dictation test in Australia is understood to be unique, it may not be irrelevant to enquire into its working. The suggestion for adopting a "non-discriminatory method of literary test in the English language" was first made to Australian Colonial Legislatures by the Imperial Government in 1897.¹ After Federation, the Commonwealth Parliament passed the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 which included among "prohibited immigrants" any person who would fail to pass the dictation test.

The Minister of the Interior selects a passage of fifty words in the English language, which is printed in slips and issued to the customs officers authorized to apply the test. The officer declares before the immigrant the language of the selected passage and reads out it at a pace suitable for dictation. If he fails to write out and sign the paper in the presence of the officer, he is declared a prohibited immigrant and is not permitted to land. An immigrant who is not prepared to take the test at the time of his arrival may, on filing a bond in the sum of £100, take the test at any time within three months thereafter.

The test is however applied only when it is considered necessary to exclude an immigrant. In practice it is not usually applied to

¹ On the basis of the Act of 1897 in Natal, Western Australia adopted the language test in 1897, New South Wales and Tasmania in the following year.

² Here is a specimen passage:

"Wines are made by crushing the grapes and letting the juice ferment. The skins of the fruit may be fermented in the juice, thus making red wines that take their colour from the pigment under the skin. Juice alone is used in making white wines. The sugar in grapes produces alcohol."

Europeans and the number of persons admitted in 1934, for example, without the dictation test was 52,457. Thus, the Immigration Restriction Law is non-discriminative in form but it is so in its administration. It is "not a test of fitness for admission but a flexible method of exclusion." Nor is it an efficient method of keeping out undesirables who may possess unusual linguistic attainments. Canada enforces a reading test in order to exclude illiterate persons and the language for the test is selected by the immigrant, not the immigration officer. It is obvious that the purpose of the dictation test is to place an almost insuperable barrier in the way of Asiatic immigrants, for the officer authorised to administer the test may choose "any European language."

It is interesting to note in this connection that when the Japanese Government pointed out that insistence on knowledge of a European language would operate "discriminatively as against Japanese nationals," the Immigration Act was amended in 1905 by the substitution of "any prescribed language" for "any European language." Prior to this amendment, the Commonwealth of Australia had an informal arrangement, in the nature of a "gentlemen's agreement" with the Japanese Government, under which bona-fide students, merchants and tourists from Japan were permitted to enter Australia for a stay of twelve months (the period was extended after the first World War) without liability to the dictation test. India was subsequently given the benefit of this agreement.

In order to discourage immigration from India, the Indians already domiciled were denied the right of franchise both in Western Australia and Queensland, and they were debarred from participating in the mining, dairy and sugar industries. The Factories Act, the Mining Act, the Early Closing Act—all these measures passed in Western Australia in 1904 provide statutory racial discrimination. In 1907, the Asiatic immigrants were disqualified as electors. The "White Australia" policy so tenaciously pursued by the Commonwealth achieved the desired result. The number of Indians permanently settled in Australia was about 2,400 in 1921, and since then there has been a decrease in the number of domiciled Indians. In support of the "White Australia" policy, it is argued that the future of the Dominion is bound up in the preservation of the European standard of living, institutions

and traditions, and these can only be maintained if the population is kept homogeneous. This policy is thus regarded, in the words of the Right Hon'ble W. M. Hughes, "as an integral part of the national life of the Australian people."

Yet, if we consider the geographical background of Australia's economy, only about 35 per cent. of the area is suitable for settlement by whites of normal European constitution. Tropical Australia presents serious problems in regard to the well-being of its white residents, and it can be safely asserted that the opening of the tropical north must be left to peoples who are physically adapted for it.

Over a hundred years ago, New Zealand was described by a pioneer British colonist "as the fittest country in the world for colonization, as the most beautiful country with the finest climate and the most productive soil." These words were uttered before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and within a short time, New Zealand became a white man's colony. The immigration policy of the Government of New Zealand followed the lead taken by Australia. Indians come under the category of "race aliens," an expression designated to include all non-Europeans; but the immigration from India has been almost negligible. Before 1914, the total number of Indians was about 700, and the increase to 1,144 by 1932 was largely due to the immigration of ex-indentured labourers from Fiji. Most of these Indians had acquired a knowledge of English and could easily satisfy the language test. It was therefore necessary to pass an Act under which persons other than natural-born British subjects would be required to make New Zealand the land of their adoption. Thus, although there was no prohibition of permanent domicile for an Indian as in Australia, a large proportion of these labourers could not establish themselves in New Zealand in small-scale farming and in petty trade. Most of them became fruit-vendors, pedlars, small artisans, and casual labourers. Some, mostly Punjabis, settled in rural areas and became engaged in farming. There is also a small trading Indian community in the cities.

While the domiciled Indians are now given the franchise and other privileges of citizenship (excepting the benefits of the Old Age Pension Act), the Government have firmly adopted a policy for a white New Zealand, and consequently their post-1918 immigration legislation has been drastic and severely restricted

Indian immigration. In 1936, the Indians in New Zealand numbered about 824 only.

VI

The first World War (1914-18) brought all the units of the British Empire together in a common struggle, and seemed to have paved the way for a fraternity among the nations of the Empire. The Dominions which considered Indians as "subject-citizens" and not "citizen-subjects" seemed to forget their crude arrogance and welcomed India's active co-operation in imperial affairs. A few months after the Armistice, General Smuts in an address in Johannesburg indicated this change of attitude towards India. He said: "I do not look down on Indians. I look up to them. . . . There have been Indians who have been amongst the greatest men in the history of the world. There have been Indians who have been amongst the greatest leaders of the human race, whose shoes I am unworthy to untie."

In recognition of India's services during the Great War, the Imperial Government invited India to join "the inner circle" of the British Empire. "She had bled herself white," declared Sir (then Mr.) Austen Chamberlain, "at the beginning of the War to supply the deficiencies of the Empire in troops, arms and guns." But the recognition was ceremonial rather than real. While the Dominion representatives to these Conferences were there as the heads of their own autonomous governments, the Indian members were nominated by the Imperial Government. It is this lack of a representative character which makes India's participation in the Imperial Conference¹ not only unreal and illusory, but dangerously compromising. The reciprocity resolution in 1917, to which we shall presently refer, was a distinct gain from the point of view of the Dominions, as it fully endorsed their own policy, but to Indians it was a surrender and a sacrifice.

The question of free citizenship within the Empire came before the Imperial War Conference of 1917 and 1918. On the motion

¹ The first gathering of the Prime Ministers of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, called Colonial Conference, was held in London in 1887 on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession. It was presided over by the Colonial Secretary. In 1907, the Conference was designated an Imperial Conference and the British Prime Minister took the chair. During the first World War the gathering was called the Imperial War Conference.

moved by the late Lord Sinha, the following resolution was accepted by the Conference. The resolution runs as follows:

“(1) It is an inherent function of the Governments of the several communities of the British Commonwealth including India, that each should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restriction on immigration from any of the other countries.

(2) British citizens domiciled in any British country including India, should be admitted into any other British country for visits, for the purpose of pleasure or commerce, including temporary residence for the purpose of pleasure or commerce, including temporary residence for the purpose of education; such right shall not extend to a visit or temporary residence for labour purposes or to permanent settlement.

(3) Indians already permanently domiciled in the other British countries should be allowed to bring in their wives and minor children on condition: (a) that not more than one wife and her children shall be admitted for each such Indian; and (b) that each individual so admitted shall be certified by the Government of India as being the lawful wife or child of such Indian.”

The Conference reaffirmed the resolution quoted above; but the representatives of South Africa dissented from the general opinion of the Conference that “in the interests of the solidarity of the Commonwealth” it was desirable that the rights of Indians (domiciled in some parts of the Empire) to citizenship should be recognised. However, the outstanding result emerging from these Conferences was that India and the Dominions were allowed to settle their mutual differences without the direct intervention of the Imperial Government. In the past, such matters were under the control of the Colonial Office and were subject to the exigencies of British political interests rather than those of the Indian people. The liberal opinion in India appeared to be contented with the attitude of the Imperial Conference, and interpreted it as being a definite break from the policy that so long dominated India's relationship with the British Dominions and Colonies.

In 1922 the Indian Legislative Assembly passed a comprehensive measure which empowered the Government of India to control emigration and to protect Indian interests. That Act

declared that "emigration for the purpose of unskilled labour shall not be lawful except to such countries and on such terms and conditions as the Governor-General in Council, by notification, may specify in this behalf and that the notification shall have the full consent of both Chambers." The Assembly appointed a Standing Emigration Committee consisting of twelve members, to keep a watchful eye upon the conditions under which Indian labour is recruited for other parts of the Empire. The European planters, whose object has always been to secure an adequate supply of unskilled labour at a minimum cost for a maximum period, disliked the transfer of the control of emigration from India to the hands of the elected Legislature.

But the problem of domiciled Indians became increasingly acute. As a matter of fact, deliberate steps were taken to curtail their rights as citizens. The disabilities under which they suffered and the manifest injustices which seemed to continue in a sinister manner alarmed those who had regarded the ideal of Imperial Citizenship as having any legal significance. As a gesture of good faith and sympathy, the Government of India invited the late Right Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri, the doyen of the Indian liberals, to visit the Dominions with the object of "softening the prejudice" against Indians and to appeal to the respective Governments and publics for due recognition of India's status within the British Empire.

Canada admitted the reasonableness of the claim of Indians to full equality of citizenship, and promised to do all that lay in her power for enacting necessary legislative measures. The Indian population, consisting largely of the sturdy Sikhs from the Punjab, was found in the province of British Columbia. They were mostly employed in the lumber industry, and proved themselves to be as efficient as the Canadian labourers. Some of the immigrants were engaged in the peaceful occupation of agriculture. But the Indians residing in British Columbia, numbering over 1,000, are excluded from the privilege of franchise and even denied civic rights. It is their success as settlers that appears to have antagonised them as being potential competitors! Until recently the domiciled Indians were not allowed to bring their wives and minor children to the Dominion.

We have already mentioned the insistence on a continuous journey from India which was one of the methods employed by

Canada to restrict immigration. Since the acceptance of the Reciprocity resolution in 1918, by the Imperial Conference, Canada has bolted her door to Indian immigrants desirous of settling in the country. They can now enter Canada only for temporary residence. "The exclusion of Orientals from public rights," writes a Canadian author, "seems to rest on a widespread belief that even in the second or third generation Canadians of oriental race are less Canadian than their fellow-Canadians of other races, and that they would be so even if they were similarly treated."¹

As regards the domiciled Indians, they enjoy the federal franchise in all parts of Canada excepting British Columbia. By an Amendment to the Franchise Act in 1931, Indians who served in the Canadian Forces during the first World War are allowed to have their names placed on the voters' lists of the Province. But they are excluded from election to the Provincial legislature, from appointment to municipal office, from nomination at an election of school trustees, and finally from jury service. Even if there are no express legal enactments^a against them, there is a *de facto* exclusion of Indians from the public services and the professions of law and pharmacy in British Columbia. Licenses for hand-logging are issued to persons on the voters' list or North-American Indians, and in sales of Crown timber it is understood that Asiatics shall not be employed. The same spirit of racialism dominates relations in the sphere of trade and commerce. A restaurant may refuse to serve Orientals and a theatre or cinema may restrict them to certain seats. By her immigration restrictions and by encouraging discriminative treatment of Asiatics, the number of Indian immigrants decreased from 2,623 in 1908 to 80 in 1931. During a decade from 1921 to 1930, only 418 Indians were admitted to Canada for mere visits ; but up to 150 Japanese newcomers were permitted entry as immigrants each year.

There had been no indentured emigration of any importance to Australia, but some 2,400 Indians have adopted that country as their home. The right of domicile is granted to them. They can exercise full franchise and their children are allowed to go to the State schools. But any form of immigration which may lead to

¹ "Legal status of Aliens in Pacific Countries," edited by Norman Mackenzie, 1937.

^a As embodied in the Commonwealth Immigration Act, the policy "is entirely non-discriminatory and contains no suggestion of racial bias."

permanent residence in any part of Australia is prohibited. The colour prejudice is not so conspicuous as it is in South Africa, but the Government of the Commonwealth had never accepted the principle of racial equality which her spokesmen persistently opposed at the Peace Conference. To them Australia must remain pure white ! In Queensland the law requires the labourer to satisfy a dictation test and, because the majority of Indians are illiterate, they are excluded from the dairying industry and the sugar plantations. Australia, however, removed the restriction relating to the employment of Indians in the banana industry, and promised to admit Indians to Old Age Pensions. Through Mr. Sastri's intervention some minor grievances were redressed and certain restrictions on free citizenship were removed. It should be noted that in 1925 the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act removing the disqualification on racial grounds from (a) natives of British India, and (b) persons who have become naturalized. Hitherto Indians, in common with aboriginal natives, had been debarred from enrolment as electors of the Commonwealth. Since Australia accepted the Resolution of the Imperial Conference in regard to the citizenship rights of Indians domiciled in the Dominions, the Bill admitting to the Federal franchise all adult Indians received approval of all parties in Australia.

In the Transvaal, where colour prejudice is stronger than in Natal, the disabilities imposed on Indians were also severe. The cessation of indentured labour in Natal, as a retaliation against the Government of Natal, made the position of domiciled Indians there worse. They were deprived of the provincial franchise in 1897 and of the municipal franchise in 1924. In the following year they also lost the township franchise, and the Union Government proceeded to bring in "the Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Bill" with the object of restricting Indians from acquiring land. Methods of racial discrimination were adopted in the operation of the licensing laws, which resulted in segregating Indian traders not only in certain quarters in the towns, but also in rural areas. In 1921, the Licensing Officer of Durban, in his evidence before the Asiatic Commission, frankly admitted that "a European license is granted as a matter of course whereas an Indian license is refused as a matter of course if it is a new one."

In 1923 it was suggested at the Imperial Conference that the Union Government of South Africa should agree to the proposal

for appointing an agent of the Government of India in the Union who would act as a liaison-officer between the two Governments and watch the interests of Indian nationals on the spot. This was rejected on the plea that no further concessions to Indians in South Africa could be granted, and consequently no useful purpose would be served by the appointment of an intermediary. General (now Field-Marshal) Smuts' peroration on this occasion was illuminating. This philosopher-statesman declared that the Union Government were now concerned with "the basic consideration for the continuance of Western civilization" and should not encourage extension of political rights of Indians within its domain. His definition of British Empire Citizenship, presented to the Imperial Conference in a memorandum, may be of interest. He summed the matter up thus:

"The Indians' claim for equal franchise rights in the Empire outside of India arises, in my opinion, from a misconception of the nature of British citizenship. This misconception is not confined to India, but is fairly general. . . .

This misconception arises, not from the fact, but from the assumption that all subjects of the King are equal, that in an Empire where there is a common King there should be common and equal citizenship, and that all differences and distinctions are wrong in principle. Hence it is claimed that whether a British subject has or has not political rights in his country of origin, he should, on migration to another part of the Empire where British subjects enjoy full political rights, be entitled automatically to the enjoyment of these rights. It is on this basis that equal political rights are claimed for Indians who live in the Dominions or Colonies outside India. . . .

There is no common equal British citizenship in the Empire. . . . There is no indignity or affront at all in the denial of such equality. . . .

The newer conception of the British Empire as a smaller League of Nations, as a partnership of free and equal nations under a common hereditary sovereign, involves an even further departure from the simple conception of a unitary citizenship. British citizenship has been variable in the past: it is bound to be even more so in the future. . . ."¹

¹ Cmd. 1988 (1923).

It was also at this Conference that an Indian delegate, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, cried: "I claim my right to take my seat as a member of King George's Household. I shall not be content with a place in his outer stables."

VII

In the following year, with the appointment of General Hertzog as Prime Minister, the Union Government introduced a Class Areas Bill, with the object of segregating Asiatics in particular urban centres throughout the Union. The Asiatic community, with a total population of 200,000 was alarmed and the situation was ripe for the recrudescence of racial hostility. Although the Bill was made to appear as a measure of general application, its main intention was to compel Indians to live in compulsory segregation. "The Bill frankly starts," declared Dr. Malan as Minister of the Interior in introducing the measure, "from the supposition that the Indian as a race in this country is an alien element in the population, and that no solution of this question will be acceptable to the country, unless it results in a very considerable reduction of the Indian population." Owing to the dissolution of the House of Assembly, however, the Bill did not pass beyond the preliminary stages. But when controversy raged over the Class Areas Bill in the Union of South Africa, Sir Thomas Watt, who once held the office of a minister in Natal, explained in a letter to the *Times* (dated 30th March, 1926) the *raison d'être* of the relations between white and coloured. He wrote as follows:

"The white man, English as well as Dutch, is determined to do all he can to remain, and what is more, to rule. He hopes to get the sympathy and support of the Mother Country. If that is withheld he will not be deterred. To those who say that England cannot be a party to a great act of injustice, I would reply that this matter is, to us in South Africa, such a vital and fundamental matter, that no ethical considerations, such as the rights of man and equal opportunities for all non-Europeans, will be allowed to stand in the way. It is a question of self-preservation with us. We are now a self-governing nation with full power to manage our own affairs."

Meanwhile, Indian opinion representing all communities and classes rallied against such measures as were designed to inflict invidious distinction on Indians in the Empire overseas. In 1926, for instance, when the Union Government decided to bring up the Class Areas Bill (Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration—Further Provision Bill), the Government of India sent a deputation to give evidence before the Select Committee. An arrangement was also made to discuss the whole position of the Indians in South Africa at a Round Table Conference in Cape Town (1927). Both Governments took cognizance of the fact that upon this question there was a solid opposition from all classes and communities in India, and that it would be unwise to take any decision which would be interpreted as repudiating the spirit of the resolution on citizenship within the Empire repeatedly affirmed by the Imperial Conference.

Yet the prevailing opinion of Natal can best be reflected by the cheers that greeted a speech of welcome to the Indian delegates when they visited the province. After expressing hopes that the Conference deliberations would prove successful, the speaker could not resist the neat reminder that: "The Empire of India is one of the brilliant stars in what some people call the Commonwealth of Free Nations, but which I prefer to call the British Empire."¹

The Union Government, however, agreed to postpone the consideration of the Bill, and undertook to propose a scheme of voluntary but assisted repatriation of the Indians. The "Scheme of Assisted Emigration" proposed by the Union Government provided for a bonus of £20 to every adult Indian if he was willing to return to India, in addition to his free passage. Meanwhile they promised to investigate the general condition of Indians domiciled in South Africa and some relief from colour bar was promised in matters of employment. In order to facilitate a closer co-operation between the two Governments, a permanent Agent of the Government of India was appointed in South Africa, and the late Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastri was selected for the post. The result of the Round Table Conference was designated the "Capetown Agreement."

But the repatriation scheme was found unworkable on any large scale. For the period of eight years from 1924 to 1932, the

¹ Quoted in *There are no South Africans* by G. H. Calpin.

departures of repatriated Indians exceeded arrival by 12,868. Lord Hailey estimates in his *African Survey* that "some 15,000 Indians were repatriated under the agreement between the years 1927 and 1935." The figures for assisted emigration to India were 161 in 1937, 135 in 1938, 87 in 1939, and 36 in 1940. The distribution of the Indian population of the Union shows why it could not be easily rooted out from the country. Besides, the percentage of Indians born in South Africa had increased from 62 to 82 per cent. during the years 1921-1936.

TABLE III

	1911	1921	1936
Cape of Good Hope ..	6,606	6,498	10,692
Natal	133,031	141,336	183,646
Transvaal ..	10,048	13,405	25,561
Orange Free State ..	106	100	29
Total Union	149,791	161,339	219,928
Born in the Union of South Africa	63,776	102,323	—

Although the census does not record any substantial increase between 1911 and 1921, a very large proportion (nearly 80 per cent.) of the Indians were born in South Africa and had settled in the country after their period of indenture. The traders who followed the emigrants had acquired little shops throughout the country (mainly in Natal) and had secured for themselves a large part of the trade with the natives. Many Indian settlers take to market gardening and some earn their livelihood as domestic servants. It can be said with justice that, in carrying out these varied occupations, Indian settlers do not enter into competition with Europeans, for such work would not otherwise be undertaken by the European or the native except in domestic service.

Then there are Indians who have acquired wealth and position through various branches of the learned professions and through commercial enterprise. Their co-operation with the European mercantile community has been fruitful in many ways; most of them are cultured and bear the dignity of a higher civilization. Yet they are denied the elementary rights of a citizen. Nowhere in the Union do they enjoy any franchise rights; even on municipal

councils they have no voice. They cannot move from province to province; nor can they own property where they like. The acquisition of property by them is regarded as "encroachment."

Inadequate response to the scheme designed to reduce the Indian population in South Africa disappointed the Union Government, and this served as a plea for attempts to impose further disabilities on Indians. They deluded themselves in thinking that the Capetown Agreement of 1927 was their Magna Charta; for it promised to limit the discretionary powers of local authorities in revising trade licensing laws and to apply without bias the principle underlying the Industrial Conciliation Act in regard to equal pay for equal work. Now they realised that the Union Government had no intention of adhering to all the terms of that Agreement. Indians were included in the Colour Bar legislation which served to exclude them from skilled occupations. Another Round Table Conference was therefore held in 1932, and the Union Government was persuaded not to undermine the entire basis of the Capetown Agreement at a time when the Government of India were concerned with India's constitutional problems. It was agreed that an investigation should be undertaken as to the possibilities of a colonization scheme for settling Indians, both from India and from South Africa, in other countries.

Two successive Round Table Conferences resulted in an amicable interchange of good wishes and courtesies, but achieved nothing of any importance to protect Indian interests in South Africa. Although the Capetown Agreement and the establishment of an office of Agent-General of India indicate a conciliatory attitude towards Indians within the Union, the official policy of the Union Government remains deeply rooted in racial and colour prejudice, which manifests itself in indefensible discrimination in administrative and legislative matters on the ground of colour and creed alone. In 1936, the Union Legislature permitted three Bills which were based upon the principle of racial segregation. The invalidity of marriage between a European and a coloured person, the prohibition of the employment of Europeans by non-Europeans, and further disabilities on the ownership of property by persons belonging to Asiatic races were the objects of these Bills. When two of the three Bills were referred to a Select Committee, it refused to grant leave to the Agent-General for India and his Secretary to be present during the hear-

ing of the evidence! At the same time, on the strong representation of the Japanese Consul, the Union Government agreed to exclude the Japanese from the definition of the word "Asiatic."

Although Indians have been debarred from owning property in the Transvaal since 1885, they succeeded in occupying landed properties through trustees or through land-holding companies. Therefore, the Union Government brought forward the Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure (Amendment) Act in 1931; and in response to fresh agitation against such a measure, the Government of India sent another delegation to South Africa. The Act extended the scope of the Gold Law of 1908 to other land and to trading on the land covered by a series of legislative measures enacted since 1885. The plea of the delegation was in vain and the Act was passed in 1932. It was, however, decided to appoint a Commission to investigate the position of Asiatic land tenure, with a view to recommending the nature and extent of exemptions to be made under this Act. The Commission, presided over by the Hon. Mr. Justice Feetham, suggested temporary protection to Asiatics and South African coloured people in the "exempted areas," that is, the areas to be set aside for their occupation. The recommendations of the Feetham Commission were considered by a Select Committee of the House of Assembly which agreed to grant to coloured persons the right of ownership in three types of areas, namely, (1) locations specially recommended by the Feetham Commission: (2) Asiatic bazaars and (3) areas predominantly or exclusively occupied by coloured peoples. Accordingly, the Asiatic Land Tenure Act (Amendment) was passed in 1936, offering a certain amount of relief to non-European property holders. But owing to the rapid industrialisation of the "exempted areas," they have already been removed from a great part of these areas. It should also be noted that simultaneously with the passing of the new Act, the Police have put into effect Resolution No. 104 of 1871 of the Transvaal Volksraad, prohibiting the occupation of land in towns and villages by coloured persons. The period of the protection offered by the Asiatic Land Tenure Act of 1936 expired on April 30th, 1939; and the Asiatic Land Laws Commission's Report to the Union Government re-opened the question of the ownership of property by Indians in the Transvaal. Once again the opportunity of enforcing racial segregation came before the House of Assembly.

The Minister of the Interior introduced a fresh measure which contained the following provisions:¹

- (1) Extension of the period of grace to 1st May, 1941.
- (2) Prohibition, as from 30th April, 1939, of the granting of a certificate for new trading licences to Asiatics, or on their behalf, in the Transvaal except with the Minister's permission.
- (3) Prohibition, as from 30th April, 1939, of the granting of a certificate entitling an Asiatic to remove his business to other premises, except with the Minister's permission.
- (4) Cancellation of any licence issued to a non-Asiatic after the commencement of the Act if at any time before 1st May, 1941, an Asiatic is in actual control of the business or trade licensed.
- (5) Similar prohibitions in respect of the leasing of property to Asiatics, or on their behalf, after 30th April, 1939.
- (6) Asiatic bazaars and other areas specially assigned to Asiatics in the Transvaal are to be exempt.
- (7) Asiatics who remove their business illegally may be ejected by order of Court on the application of the authority issuing certificates for licences.
- (8) "Asiatic" includes any company or other means of holding an interest on behalf of, or for, the benefit of an Asiatic.
- (9) Hawkers are not to be affected by this law.

The Bill aroused fierce opposition among the Indian community in South Africa and the All-India Congress Committee reminded the Union Government that the policy initiated by them was a direct breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, the Capetown Agreement of 1927 and the subsequent promises given by responsible Ministers on their behalf. The Asiatic Enquiry Commission (1924) recommended, for example, that "there be no compulsory segregation of Asiatics" but agitation to relegate the two hundred thousand Indians to ghettos continued. In March 1939 the Transvaal Provincial Council passed a resolution opposing the Feetham recommendations and

¹ The Summary is taken from *Race Relations News*, June, 1939.

demanding complete segregation of Indians. However, the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill was given its third reading on June 2nd, 1939. It was an Interim Bill proposing to "peg" the present status of Asiatics for two years, pending a radical settlement of the problem in consultation with the Government of India. The temper of the debate was, however, clear evidence of the intention of the Government to adopt a policy of total segregation—residential, social, economic and political—between Europeans and non-Europeans including the Indians. Thus, the principle accepted in the Capetown Agreement was no longer operative in adjusting the relations of Indians to the European population in the Union. Such an iniquitous legislative measure not only revealed the fatal weakness in intra-imperial relations, but also brought about party dissensions in the Union of South Africa. In the light of events since the passing of the Act, it may be safely asserted that so long as the Union Government adhere to the principle of racial segregation and pursue what is known as the "civilised labour policy," the conditions for improved relations between the white and non-white peoples will remain restricted to a very limited scope. The hope of a tolerant and equitable solution, inspired by the Capetown Agreement, was not realised because the Union Government stood for the policy that the European in South Africa was to be the master and the non-European his servant. They adopted methods calculated to encourage racial and colour prejudice, created zones of segregation of non-European races, and debarred them from the privilege of the parliamentary and municipal franchise. Responsible men appointed to the post of Agent-General of India (now raised to the status of High Commissioner) have to admit in despair that "it is very difficult to get anything done. In spite of constant efforts there is generally a blank wall which obstructs every attempt." The question of granting franchise to Indians in provincial and municipal councils remained undecided till 1942 when it was announced that the privilege could not be granted to them. The discriminating licensing laws resulted in a steady decrease in Indian trade licenses. Indians are not allowed to enter the Orange Free State. Their freedom to acquire land, as we have seen, is severely restricted, and in their social life they are subjected to numerous disabilities arising from colour prejudice.

And so the stigma of inferiority which characterises the social and economic status of the Indians in the Union of South Africa remains, and it remains as a potential danger, not only to the constituent members of the British Empire, but also to the peace of the world. Racial segregation within an Empire consisting of nearly 470,000,000 coloured people out of the total of 540,000,000 British subjects is not only an impossible venture, but the policy carries with it the certainty of bitter racial conflicts in the world.

VIII

The Second World War was fought, as asserted by leaders of the British Empire, to end the Nazi theory of "Master Race," but it made no difference in their outlook towards racial problems within their own domains. Indians in South Africa responded to the call for recruits and Indian troops fought side by side with South African Army in the western desert and East Africa. The achievements of Fourth Indian Division in North Africa is one of the outstanding events of the war. But in his annual report, the Agent-General (now High Commissioner) for India observes: "While it cannot be said that there has been any marked symptom of intensified racial prejudice during the year (1940) it must, however, also be recorded that there has been little practical recognition in South Africa of the great part being played by India in the common cause." The rise of the Afrikaner Cultural Movement, *The Ossewabrandwag*, which advocates the adoption of a narrow racial policy and shows bitter hostility to Indians, is a clear indication of the trend of South African opinion in regard to coloured races. The Nationalist Party leaders have been constantly urging the Government to deal with the problem of mixed marriages and to take adequate steps to put into effect the policy of segregation of Europeans and non-Europeans. In January 1940, they demanded the implementation of a policy that would separate the coloured peoples from the Europeans, strictly restricting their occupation of land and trading licenses in European areas. The Union Government agreed to set up a special Commission to investigate "Asiatic penetration in Natal and the Transvaal since 1927."

This enquiry, known as the first Broome Commission, revealed that the general position with regard to the acquisition of property

by Indians in European residential areas was "not unsatisfactory" and that there was no need for such discriminative racial legislation at this stage. After two years of deliberation, the Commission declared that where "penetration" had taken place it was the result of the Indians' desire to improve their material position and that their motives were not peculiar to them as Indians, but were "the heritage of all virile peoples." Meanwhile the 1939 legislation expired on April 30, 1941, but it was promptly extended for another two years from the above date. The Broome Commission was instructed to continue its investigation in readiness for subsequent legislative measures to deal with the situation.

Two years later the question of granting further protection to the European population against occupation of land by Indians aroused a strong feeling throughout Natal and the Transvaal. In April 1943 the Union Government felt obliged to pass the Trading and Occupation of Land (Transvaal and Natal) Bill. The objects of the Bill were: to peg for a period of three years the present ownership of property by Indians in European areas in Durban and prevent further purchases for three years; to grant the Government power by proclamation to restrict purchases of property in rural areas in Natal; and to peg the existing trading rights of Indians in the Transvaal.

Field Marshal Smuts, the Prime Minister, regretted the necessity of this legislature which might appear as being discriminative but the Government had no choice. He said that the issue had been forced by Indians! After all, Durban was a European city, which was determined to remain European. The Government could not therefore allow Indian penetration into this city. Smuts pacified the critics of the Bill by saying that the Bill was "only a standstill measure" and after three years the Government intended to examine the whole question by a proper judicial inquiry.

Field Marshal Smuts' assertion that "large-scale Indian penetration" into the European area of Durban was going on at an increasing pace was based upon the report of the second Broome Commission which stated that properties acquired by Indians in European areas during the year 1942 were considerable in comparison to the average for the years 1927-39. But, as the Natal Indian Congress pointed out in its memorandum before the Broome Commission, a map drawn up by the Durban Corpora-

tion to show Indian penetration into predominantly European areas of the city in the period 1927-40 had in fact included all property acquired by Indians since 1860! The Commission agreed that the map was inaccurate but advised the Natal Indian Congress "not to pre-suppose the City Council's intentions in the matter."

It was admitted that a minority of wealthy Indians bought up property in European residential areas. Mr. H. Polak who has intimate knowledge of Indians in South Africa writes:

In the two and a half years between October 1, 1940 and February 28, 1943, no more than 326 sites in the European area had been acquired by Indians, and of these fewer than one-sixth were occupied by them, five-sixths remaining in European occupation. The proportion of the Indian to the European population of Durban is less than one-fourth, but of the total acreage of the Old Borough, Indians own no more than 4 per cent.¹

The Government of India made three urgent representations to the Union Government pointing out that the Bill was a serious cause of offence to Indians everywhere and urging that "the difficulties could be met without restrictive legislation by bringing the pressure of public opinion to bear upon both purchasers and sellers of property." The leader of the opposition (Nationalist Party) resented the intervention of the Government of India, contending that "India had as little right as Great Britain to interfere in what it regards as the domestic affairs of South Africa." Neither the Dominion Office in London nor the Government of India could exercise even moral persuasion against a legislative measure which particularly affected the Indians in the Transvaal. It is to be noted that the Labour Party in South Africa supported the Bill.

In the debate the Minister of Finance, Mr. Hofmeyr, said that he could not accept responsibility for certain provisions in the Bill regarding the Transvaal and rather than accept them he had tendered his resignation. He and certain other members had opposed these provisions in 1939 because there had been no evidence of the existence of a situation requiring such discriminative legislation. He said: "We like to put ourselves forward as

¹ *The Sunday Times*, August 6, 1944.

trustees for the non-European people of this land, especially those who are voteless. All too often we are influenced in the administration of the trusteeship by the consideration of our own European interests. I believe that every time the facts are thrown aside and a surrender made to racial and colour prejudice we impair the human rights of a part of our people in the interests of another part of our people. Every time that happens we are sapping the moral foundation of the leadership which the European people in South Africa enjoy to-day."

Mr. Hofmeyr has on several previous occasions been critical of legislation dealing with the status of domiciled Indians. His resignation during the war would have exposed the Government to a critical public opinion. Consequently Field Marshal Smuts had appealed to him not to press his resignation, and Mr. Hofmeyr had agreed to remain in the Cabinet on the understanding that he did not approve of the proposals affecting Indians in the Transvaal.

While the issue had been forced by violent anti-Indian feeling so sedulously fostered by the European community, it was its members who had sold their property in full knowledge to Indians. The question was not however merely of ownership of property by Indians. Leaders of the Nationalist Party demanded even a residential segregation of Indians in *all* urban areas. It should be noted that the second Broome Commission did not make a distinction between ownership and occupation.

Indians in South Africa declared that they represented a community whose interests were deliberately neglected by the Government, that they owned £4,000,000 of Durban property and paid taxes, that they had no voice in the Legislature, and that only a small percentage of their taxes was spent on Indians. After all, over eighty per cent of the Indians in South Africa were South African born and were part of the South African people. "They must," writes the *Leader* (a Journal owned by Indians), "continue to demand citizen rights. They must press for democratic representation, and they must insist upon a status which grants decent housing opportunities, and right to progress."

In 1946, the Union Government passed the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act. What was "only a standstill measure" designed to deal with the situation in the city of Durban, now became applicable to Natal. While the

pegging Act of 1943 did not demarcate areas, the new Act divides Natal into two categories, namely controlled and exempted areas. The former is reserved exclusively for European, but in exempted areas any person whether European, Indian or Malay can purchase and occupy landed properties. The division bore no relation whatsoever with the size of population in a given area. In the old borough of Durban, for example, there are 25,000 Indians against 65,000 Europeans. The areas allotted to the Indians and other non-European groups total about 350 acres whilst the Europeans have 2,940 acres already in their possession. In addition some 1,121 acres owned by the Durban Municipality are also reserved for them. There are other features of the Bill which cannot but perpetuate racial antagonism and intensify conflicts between European and non-European communities in South Africa.

During the second reading of the Bill, Field Marshal Smuts said that he would like to offer something to the Indian community in return for a right that was being taken away. The Act provides, therefore, for representation of Indians in the South African Legislatures, but the basis of franchise is communal! Two Europeans shall represent Indians of the Natal and Transvaal Provinces in the Senate and three Europeans in the House of Assembly.

As a protest against the Act, the Central Legislature in India voted for applying economic sanction and for the withdrawal of the office of the High Commissioner for India in South Africa. The South-African Indian Congress sent out a delegation to Britain in the hope of enlisting the sympathy of its Government and people, and the United Nations Organisation was reminded that Field Marshal Smuts violated the very principles which he himself enunciated in his draft of the Preamble to the San Francisco Charter. But the Union of South Africa could not be persuaded to abandon its policy of race discrimination. They contend that the supremacy of European races cannot be maintained without the colour bar. They have, therefore, found it necessary to divide the Union through its statutory enactments into three racial categories based on colour! Indeed, by their failure to reconcile the interests of all the races within the Union, its Government stands condemned.

Chapter Three

INDIANS IN EAST AFRICA

I

From the arena of conflicts in the Dominions, we turn to the Colonial Empire, where the position of domiciled Indians has become increasingly difficult. In a sense the character of the struggle there is of special significance to us. The failure of the Imperial Government to protect the Indians from the racial bar and political disabilities, even in the territories directly under its administration, has also a lesson for those who still ask us not to suspect the good faith which is inferred in the term "British sense of justice." It has been clearly demonstrated that the European settlers could shape the policy of a colony in accordance with their wishes, despite all declarations of the Imperial Government that their traditional policy was to extend equal rights and opportunities to all members of the Empire.

Lord Milner, in his speech in the House of Lords on July 14th, 1920, declared: "In East Africa as in other countries under the administration of the Colonial Office, it has been the avowed principle, and it is the definite intention, of the British authorities to mete out even-handed justice between the different races inhabiting those territories." But a few months earlier, in reply to a deputation from the Nairobi Indian Association, the Governor of Kenya said that "the principle had been accepted at home that the country (meaning British East Africa) was primarily for European development, and whereas the interests of the Indians would not be lost sight of, in all respects the European must predominate." Again, Lord Delamere, in a debate over a Bill which aimed at the elimination of small Indian traders, insisted that East Africa was an English colony and therefore European interests must be paramount there.

We have already mentioned the part played by Indians in the development of East Africa. From the seventeenth century they controlled and maintained a regular trade between the sea-coasts of India and the eastern sea-board of Africa. They were the chief agents for conducting trade with the native population even in

remote areas in the interior of dark Africa. Some of them settled in trading centres and established friendly relations with the natives. It was this adaptability of Indians to life in Africa that persuaded the British East Africa Company to encourage Indian settlement on a very large scale. But they are now faced with a policy which threatens to challenge their position in East Africa.

Before the first World War the position of Indians in the East African Protectorate was no less aggravating than that in South Africa. At about the time when the Indians came into conflict with the Government of Natal, the British settlers¹ in Kenya had been carrying on an agitation against the granting of equal rights to Indians in other Colonies. In their enthusiasm for this very "laudable" object they even sent a deputation to Australia to influence public opinion there!

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the British East Africa Company, an organised instrument of mercantile imperialism, found it necessary to transfer the control of the colony to the Imperial Government on the payment of compensation amounting to £200,000. East Africa was proclaimed a Protectorate on July 1st, 1895, and its administration was placed in the hands of the Foreign Office. It was then that the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway was taken in hand, but the problem of adequate and efficient labour required for the purpose could not be solved until the Government of India sent Indian labour from the Punjab. It is estimated that over 35,000 Indian contract labourers were imported during the construction of the railway. While the majority of the Indian labourers returned to India on the termination of their contract, a number of enterprising Indians settled on the land as agriculturists, while some found work as artisans and traders. Besides, the services of Indian overseers and clerks were retained by the Administration, which looked to their recruiting agencies in India for subordinate staffs.

The Administration of Kenya was transferred from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office in 1905. Meanwhile the Colonists' Association was formed in East Africa, and it proceeded to organise the opinion of the European community in favour of maintaining the Highlands as a specific reservation for white settlement. This area, covering nearly 8,000,000 acres at a height of five to nine thousand feet above sea level, lies between Kiu.

¹ Over 15 per cent. of the European population of Kenya is of South African origin.

Station and Fort Teran Station on the Uganda Railway. It is perhaps the most fertile part of the country, and as soon as it was found suitable for plantation crops, such as coffee, sugarcane, etc. land became an attractive investment. European landholders acquired vast tracts at a nominal figure, and they were determined to confine the Indians and the natives to the lowland districts.

The report of the Land Commission appointed by the settlers pointed out the folly of easy transfers by which land would pass into the undesirable possession of Indians and argued that a great number of Europeans had come to occupy and develop the country on the understanding that the Highlands would be reserved for them. While recognising the difficulty of enacting discriminative legislation against Indians, the Secretary of State for the Colonies assured the settlers that "a reasonable discretion will be exercised in dealing with applications for land on the part of natives of India and other non-Europeans." Further, in order to ensure the predominance of European elements in the Colony, the British Foreign Office offered, at the end of the Boer War, a large part of East Africa to Zionist groups in Europe: but the Jews then declined to establish a National Home within a British territory.

The settlers felt themselves secure in the Highlands, but the agitation which the Indians organised against this virtual adoption of a discriminative policy became a source of annoyance to the Europeans, and they sought to influence the Government against the settlement of Indians even outside the reserved areas. In 1907 the Land Board of the Protectorate recommended to the Colonial Secretary that Indian immigration be discouraged and that no Government land be allotted to Indians. Lord Elgin's despatch on the question laid down the following principle:

"With regard to the granting of land to Indians, it is not consonant with the views of His Majesty's Government to impose *legal* restrictions on any particular section of the community but as a matter of administrative convenience grants should not be made to Indians in the upland areas."

Since then the policy of excluding Indians from the upland areas has become a matter of common grievance, creating a common platform on which all sections of educated Indians have stood united. Lord Elgin's decision related only to initial grants

of land in the Highlands, but the terms of the decision were later extended to prohibit the transfer of land in this area to non-Europeans. The 1915 Land Ordinance stipulated that the Governor was to have the right of veto on any transaction in regard to the transference of holdings between races. A further provision, to the effect that "leases for farms should be sold at auction," left no doubt in the minds of Indians that what was in Elgin's dispatch "a matter of administrative convenience" was in reality a step towards a policy of discrimination. The official reason for the policy is that the main concern of His Majesty's Government should be to protect the interests of the native Africans. It is, however, difficult to reconcile this anxiety for the rights of the native with the fact that about some 17,000 square miles in the healthiest part of the country have been reserved for the European settlers, whereas about 43,000 square miles are "reserved somewhat precariously" for over 3,000,000 Africans. A native cannot buy or lease land in addition to his ancestral holdings.

According to an estimate by Dr. Norman Leys, about one half of the best land is included in the parts reserved for European settlement and occupied by some 1,600 landholders with their families and about 120,000 native employees. Of the total area reserved for the European settlers, only about two-thirds has been put to some sort of cultivation. An official estimate recorded that only one-sixth of the two-thirds was in "beneficial occupation." In other words, less than 3,000 square miles of total of the area reserved for Europeans are in "beneficial occupation."

The Secretary for State for the Colonies proposed to issue a new Order-in-Council converting what was regarded "as a matter of administrative convenience" into a Statutory restriction, although in 1923 the Government defended the existing restrictions as not being legal discrimination against Indians. Notwithstanding this policy of restriction in the sphere of land tenure, or in other matters concerning rights of citizenship, we are reminded that "it is against all our (British) cherished conceptions to deny to any group of subjects in a country administered by the British Crown the full status of citizenship in that country."¹

It was not merely on the land question that the conflict with Indians in Kenya arose. Imbued with the opinion that the racial

¹ *The Times*, 29th February, 1940, in a leading article. See Field-Marshal Smuts' interpretation of British Empire Citizenship, p. 77.

problem arising out of Indian immigration could only be solved by "segregation," the European settlers were determined not to admit Indians on a footing of equality with them, either in franchise or in the ownership of land or in the matter of employment in public offices.

A strong body of Europeans had tried to restrict immigration from India by emulating the action of the Governments of Natal and of the Transvaal. When the agitation, fomented by European settlers, against the granting of any concessions to Indians, was perplexing the British Government, it was refreshing to hear the views of Mr. Winston Churchill on the claim of the Indians in the colony. He then observed:¹

"... His rights as a human being, his rights as a British subject are equally engaged. It was the Sikh soldier who bore an honourable part in the conquest and pacification of those East African countries. It is the Indian trader who, penetrating and maintaining himself in all sorts of places to which no white man could go, or in which no white man could earn a living, has more than anyone else developed the early beginnings of trade and opened up the first slender means of communication. It was by Indian labour that the one vital railway on which everything else depends was constructed. It is the Indian banker who supplies perhaps the larger part of the capital yet available for business and enterprise and to whom the white settlers have not hesitated to approach for financial aid. The Indian was here long before the first British officer. He may point to as many generations of useful industry on the coast and inland as the white settlers, especially the most recently arrived contingents from South Africa (the loudest against him of all) can count years of residence.

"Is it possible for any Government," continues Mr. Churchill, "with a scrap of respect for honest dealing between man and man to embark upon a policy of deliberately squeezing out the native of India from regions in which he has established himself under every security of good faith? Most of all, we ask, is such a policy possible to the Government which bears sway over three hundred millions of our

¹ Reported in *The Daily Chronicle*, 2nd September, 1910. Also, see *My African Journey*, by Winston Churchill.

Indian Empire? And is it, after all, beyond our reach to provide, if not a perfect, at any rate a practical answer? There ought to be no insuperable difficulty in the present state of political knowledge and social organisation, in assigning different spheres to the external activity of different races. The great powers have partitioned Africa territorially. Is it beyond the wit of man to divide it economically? The co-operation of many kinds of men is needed for the cultivation of such a noble estate. Is it impossible to regulate in full and intricate detail the conditions under which that co-operation shall take place? Here white men can live and thrive, there they cannot. Here is a task for one, there is an opportunity for another. The world is big enough. There is plenty of room for all. Why cannot we settle it fairly?"

But when this high priest of British Imperialism came to hold the position of the Secretary of State for Colonies, he played a somewhat different tune. At the East African Dinner in London, in 1922, he assured the Europeans that their rights in regard to the Highlands would be maintained and that a principle of equal rights of various communities in Kenya would have to be applied in accordance with standards of civilization! In his speech, he definitely set aside the principle of equality of status for Indians but conceded that their interests should receive a careful consideration from the Government.

The situation was indeed embarrassing to the Government of India, especially at a time when the tide of political agitation was running high. They were anxious to make it appear that the policy and action of the Dominions and Colonies should in no wise offer affront to India, and they sought to conciliate Indian opinion by explaining that Mr. Churchill's views did not represent the policy of the Cabinet. The Legislative Assembly, however, raised a voice of protest against the "indiscreet, unwise, reckless and irresponsible" pronouncement from a member of the Imperial Government, and passed a resolution stating that any attempt to violate the principle of equality of status of Indians in Kenya would create a further breach in the relationship between India and the Empire. The Imperial Government were reminded of the service Indian troops rendered in German East Africa during the World War. Nevertheless, the strenuous opposition of the British settlers in the Kenya colony to the recognition of the rights of

some forty thousand Indians living there gathered a fresh momentum soon after the termination of hostilities in 1918.

II

The post-war attitude towards the Indian question in Kenya was influenced not only by an over-emphasis on the interests of the settlers, who numbered over 1,800 and included a section representing the land-owning aristocracy and ruling class of Great Britain, but also by the formulation of a wide Imperial policy in Africa. The Kenya (Annexation) Order-in-Council, 1920, was an expression of that policy and brought the whole of the territories in East Africa under a unified administration. The demand for an elective franchise was also conceded to the Europeans, and the Indian community then realised that the time had come to assert its political rights.

In the midst of the war period it became necessary to assure political India that the policy of the Imperial Government was to inaugurate "responsible government" in India. The famous declaration of August 20th, 1917, and the acceptance of the principle of reciprocity of treatment between India and the Empire overseas by the Imperial War Conference¹ in the same year alarmed the colonists in East Africa. They felt that the "Indian question" would now appear before them in an acute form, and that the agitation against discriminative measures would receive fresh impetus. Soon after the Armistice (1918) the entire European community became united in preparing to oppose Indian claims to equal rights and privileges, and a Commission was appointed for the purpose of finding cognate reasons in justification of the European attitude. It expressed a great concern for the African, whose training under Western ideals was a "sacred" responsibility, and observed: "If we further complicate this task by continuing to expose the African to the antagonistic influence of the Asiatic, as distinct from European philosophy, we shall be guilty of a breach of duty." The report (1919) brought to the surface all the ugly aspects of the controversy and contained statements about Indians which were deliberately designed to give offence to their feelings. It argued that the presence of Indians was detrimental to the economic interests of the natives, that "because of his

¹ See Chapter II, p. 73.

incurable repugnance to sanitation and hygiene" the Indian exercises an unwholesome influence on the population, that "the moral depravity is equally damaging to the African," and so on. Inspired by the feeling of racial antagonism, the report went on to assert that the Indians were carriers of plague and other filthy diseases, and that they were also inciters to crime!

The actual words of the Commission may be of interest. After stating categorically that "in every direction the sphere of the Indian is not complementary but competitive with that of the European and African," the Commission wrote: "Physically the Indian is not a wholesome influence because of his incurable repugnance to sanitation and hygiene. The moral depravity of the Indian is equally damaging to the African, who in his natural state has been innocent of the worst vices of the East. The presence of the Indian in Africa is quite obviously inimical to the interests of European and native. The error ought gradually to be rectified as far as possible by restricting fresh immigration and by partial repatriation."

The representative Indians in Kenya and in India appealed to the Imperial Government through appropriate channels, and insisted upon giving effect to the resolution of the Imperial Conference which definitely declared against any discrimination between the different races within the Empire. They asked for (1) the abolition of the exclusive rights of Europeans to own land in the Highlands; (2) the withdrawal of the policy of segregating Indians and of preventing them from living in the residential and commercial districts of the towns; (3) the grant of equal franchise in the Legislative Council; and (4) the system of a common electoral roll for the colony. They realised that disabilities imposed upon them in civic life, such as restrictions in the use of railway coaches, hotels, public conveniences, etc., would be removed only when the fundamental rights of citizenship were acquired. In submitting their case before the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, the deputation refuted the libellous charges made against the Indian community, and argued that it was not asking for any preferential treatment from the local Government.

The European community was, however, determined to resist the grant of such concessions to Indians, and reminded the Imperial Government of their solemn responsibility of protecting

the natives from any influence other than that of Western civilization. It therefore urged the necessity of placing restrictions on Indian immigration, and of allowing the local Government to determine the composition of the population in East Africa. The organised efforts of the Europeans bore some tangible results when the Governor of Kenya was persuaded to support them in their persistent opposition to the demands of the Indians. Indeed, the European Convention, known as the "Settlers' Parliament," wields a great influence in the government of the colony, and Mr. MacGregor Ross observes that the Governors have always been "subservient to the Convention."

But the controversy reached the Imperial Government at a time when steps were being taken to inaugurate the Reforms of 1919 in India, and also when the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with mandated territories in Africa in which there should be no racial discrimination. As a result of joint deliberations between the India Office and the Colonial Office, there emerged what is known as the "Milner Solution."¹ It conceded the principle of Indian representation, under a restricted franchise, on the Legislative Council, but retained the difference between Indian and European representation; it declared in impressive rhetorical language the policy of distributing "even-handed justice between races" within the Empire, but defended the principle of segregation. It seemed to disapprove of the attitude of the Europeans towards the Indian community, but made no alteration in the administrative measures which were largely the outcome of racial bias. Yet the Kenya Europeans were dissatisfied chiefly because Lord Milner did not endorse the policy of restricting immigration from India!

It became increasingly clear to Indian leaders in the colony that no redress of their legitimate grievances would be secured unless their case was taken up by the Indian National Congress; but there was also an imperative necessity for conducting the agitation in East Africa with renewed vigour. At a mass meeting (August 22nd, 1920) they passed a resolution protesting against Lord Milner's decision, which undoubtedly assigned an inferior status to them by approving the principle of racial segregation and by putting unfair restrictions on the ownership of land. As

¹ This was announced on May 21st, 1920, and its publication was followed by a debate in the House of Lords on July 14th.

regards representation on the Legislative and Municipal Councils, Indians could not follow the logic of his lordship's argument in favour of adopting a discriminative policy. The adoption of the technique of non-cooperation was proposed, which would have meant the boycott of European merchandise, cessation of all commercial transactions with European firms, and a demonstration of non-violent methods of facing a powerful opposition before the natives and other elements of the population.

But the quality of leadership necessary for directing an agitation based upon the spirit of non-violent non-cooperation was lacking among the Indians in Kenya. Most of them were traders with vested interests, and they themselves became apprehensive of the consequences of "bringing politics into commerce." Their threats of direct action were, therefore, tempered with the suggestion for a round-table conference, which the European Convention accepted. The Governor convened the Conference, but three days' discussions brought forth no means of arriving at a compromise. Both parties then looked to the Imperial Government for a settlement of the dispute. While the European settlers, merchants and administrators all combined to prepare what, in their judgment, should be the "irreducible minimum" concessions to the claims of the Indians, the Indians relied increasingly upon the Government of India to represent their case before the Colonial Office.

This the Government of India did with much credit. They pointed out to the Secretary of State for India that every section of the community should have due and effective representation on the Legislative Council if it was the intention of His Majesty's Government to arrive at an equitable solution of the problems in East Africa; but they could not understand "why the European community should require eleven members to voice its views, while two members are considered to be sufficient for the Indian community." They reiterated their opinion in regard to the need of a common electoral roll and a common franchise on a reasonable property basis *plus* an educational test without racial discrimination, for all British subjects, and argued that segregation was not only inconvenient and impracticable, but also implied a racial stigma. Finally, they reviewed the position in regard to restrictions imposed on ownership of land in townships and in the uplands, and observed that the land policy of the East African

Government could not be reconciled with Lord Milner's own declaration promising "even-handed justice between the different races" inhabiting the East African colonies.¹

The Imperial Government referred the question to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Affairs under the chairmanship of Lord Islington. The Committee based its recommendations on the general principle that any measure calculated to perpetuate inequality among British subjects was unjustifiable and could not but impair the solidarity of the Empire. It was pointed out that electoral reform would be necessary in order to bring about a satisfactory representation in the Legislative Council and that the question of Indian ownership of land in the Highlands should be further investigated. As regards the question of the segregation of Indians in the residential areas of townships and also in commercial areas, it was held that the improvement of sanitary conditions and the enforcement of sanitary regulations would meet the objections raised by the European community.

The Europeans were alarmed because the trend of the report was so favourable to the Indians, and they felt that every possible means would have to be adopted for the purpose of arresting this "Indian menace" to the future of East Africa. Under the auspices of a Vigilance Committee, a campaign was organised to impress upon the European community the grave risk of accepting racial equality as the basis of the Indians' position in a British colony. A delegation visited Uganda, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa in order to enlist support against the granting of Indian demands in Kenya, and the leading Europeans endeavoured to make contacts in London with those who moved within the orbit of the official hierarchy. The controversy was thus raised to a pitch of hysteria, and it stirred up intense racial antagonism. As usual in such circumstances, the European women threw themselves into the heart of the agitation and sent a cable to the Queen, "asking her influence to protect them from the terrible Asiatic menace." They brought up the question of morals, and argued that Indian ownership in the Highlands "would mean the establishment of mixed schools with the undesirable consequences of English children sitting beside Indian children who are in all probability married and initiated into the

¹ See Correspondence regarding the position of Indians in East Africa, 1921. Cmd. 1311.

mysteries of sex.”¹ The missionaries joined the campaign with equal zest because the growth of Indian influence in East Africa was a serious handicap to the spread of Western Christian civilization! It was also alleged that Indian agitation was a part of the Soviet propaganda with a view to “disrupt the British Empire.”

Further stimulus to an agitation of this nature was provided by Mr. Winston Churchill in his capacity as Secretary of State for the Colonies. We have already referred to his speech at the East African Dinner in 1922 and to its reaction in India. The proposals he had formulated in consultation with Mr. Montagu and Sir Edward Northey, the Governor of Kenya, were not published, but were “discussed confidentially” at a closed meeting of the European Convention in November, 1921. Here Lord Delamere refused to compromise and declared that the suggestions of the Secretaries of State were “thoroughly repugnant” to the European community. Mr. Montagu, who was then the Secretary of State for India, realised that a speedy solution of the questions involved in the conflict between European settlers and Indians in East Africa was necessary for the success of his reforms in India. The matter was, therefore, referred to an inter-departmental committee composed of the Under-Secretaries of State for India and the Colonies. Their report—known as the Wood-Winterton proposals—recommended:

- (1) a common electoral roll for all British subjects with certain prescribed qualifications;
- (2) no restrictions to adequate representation of Indians on Municipal Councils;
- (3) abolition of segregation; but
- (4) no changes in the reservation of the Highlands; and finally
- (5) retention of the existing immigration regulations.

The European settlers were indignant and joined the Government of Kenya in resisting the adoption of the principle of equal franchise and the proposal for abolishing segregation. Any compromise which would allow such concessions to Indians provided no safety for the future of white civilization in Africa, and, there-

¹ Quoted in *British Policy in Kenya Colony*, by Marjorie Ruth Dilley, 1937; see also “*Memorandum on the case against the claims of Indians in Kenya*” by Lord Delamere and others.

fore, it was the solemn duty of the entire European community to oppose a policy "calculated ultimately to endanger the integrity of the British Empire." In their rebellious mood they even contemplated direct action if the Imperial Government attempted to force the issue. It is believed that "European plans for taking over the Government and clearing Indians from the Highlands were moved forward with the intention of asking the authorities what they would do about an accomplished fact." A writer's description of this rebellious attitude is illuminating. He says:

"The time for negotiation had passed; there was only one remedy—resort to arms. The Vigilance Committee (we had one in 1904) had for some time been organising an emergency military and political machine. There was a strong and able body of experienced military men in the colony. The colonists were few in number but formidable fighters, trained in the arts of war. Everything was worked out to the last detail. The ex-soldiers, all honour to them, were prepared to lose their pensions, perhaps their farms, in defending their rights. The military command was in the hands of three most experienced commanders. Plans were made to seize the railway, postal and telegraphic systems, and to kidnap the Governor (he would have come to no harm, of course). It was not a question of physical violence against the Indians: the idea of sending them to Mombasa was being entertained—that was all."¹

At any rate, a vigorous campaign to boycott Indian shops, to dismiss Indian employees from regular services and to adopt all possible measures against Indians was carried on in a manner contrary to the best traditions of any civilized community.

To the Indians, the Wood-Winterton proposals were satisfactory, for they realised that the admission of their claims to equal franchise was a promising step towards securing them against discriminative legislation. The Government of India also found no difficulty in accepting these proposals which, in their judgment, represented a justifiable compromise, although they did not consider that it fully met the claims of Indians in East Africa.

¹ *Africa's Peril*, by H. R. Abercrombie, J.P., 1938. For further account, see E. Huxley, *White Man's Country*; N. Ley, *Kenya*; and M. Rose, *Kenya from Within*.

However, at about this time the organised opposition of the European community, sponsored by Lord Delamere,¹ and the active collaboration of the Government of Kenya in rejecting the proposals synchronised with a change in the party government in Great Britain. An immediate step was then taken for negotiation with delegations from India and East Africa. The adamant attitude of the British imperialists in Kenya in refusing to negotiate was modified under the assurance that their delegation would stand firm and would refuse to be over-ruled by the Imperial Government. A delegation from the Government of India was headed by the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri.

The outcome of all attempts to arrive at an amicable solution between the two delegations was the repudiation of the Wood-Winterton proposals, which had been regarded just about a year previously as the "only approach to Statecraft."

At this stage the Imperial Government issued a White Paper² elaborating the doctrine of trusteeship of the natives, and stated that in adjudicating the varied interests in East Africa, the policy of the Government should always be directed to protect the natives, whose welfare must be of paramount consideration. It was a humane document replete with lofty ideals: it declared that "His Majesty's Government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population" and, consequently, they are bound to frame a policy in which "the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if and when those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail." The pronouncement caused violent opposition among the European settlers of Kenya and elsewhere; for it appeared to enshrine a principle which, if acted upon, would subordinate their interests to those of the Africans. As recently as 1941 a demand for its complete withdrawal was part of the platform of the "Labour Party" in Northern Rhodesia!

But the phraseology of such declarations is familiar to Indians in the Empire overseas, although nowadays they do not hear much of the doctrine of trusteeship in reference to British rule in India: its use in Indian political expressions has gone out of fashion!

¹ The Rt. Hon. Hugh Cholmondeley, later Lord Delamere, was the recognised leader of the European community in East Africa. He died in November, 1931. According to Dr. Norman Leys, the noble lord "has been the architect and director of the policy of making Kenya Colony governed by its European residents."

² *Indians in Kenya*. Cmd. 1922 of 1923.

The principle of paramountcy of native interests in East Africa was enunciated as a measure of expediency, and it was clear to Indians that, under cover of this policy, the Imperial Government sought really to protect the paramount interests of the European settlers and traders and to deny equality of privilege to other immigrant communities. Instead of framing a policy consistent with the principle of partnership, the application of which might have done justice to all elements of a mixed community, British Imperialism ignored the just claims of Indians by declaring its chief concern to be the protection of native interests! The real objective was, as Dr. Marjorie Dilley put it, "the establishment of some basis, other than racial prejudice, on which to keep Indians from equal participation in the development of a Crown Colony in which they have lived for centuries."¹

Let us pause a little over this famous State Document. It rejected the claims of the Indians for racial equality and repudiated the proposal of a common electoral roll providing an equitable system of representation, on the ground that its advantages would in practice be "illusory"; it argued that, under the special circumstances in Kenya, "no candidate . . . could stand as an advocate of the other race without sacrificing the support of his own"; and it laid down that, on the basis of communal franchise, the Indian community would elect five members to the Legislative Council and on the Executive Council one non-official Indian would, as usual, be nominated by the Governor.

As regards the reservation of the Highlands, the White Paper supported the claims of the Europeans and stated that "the existing practice must be maintained as regards both initial grants and transfers." The contention that the Land Ordinance of 1915 imposed legal restrictions was refuted by showing that the matter relating to land in the Highlands rested with the Executive.

On the question of immigration, the White Paper was careful to appear to be unsympathetic with the policy of racial discrimination. The Colonial Office could not possibly countenance the introduction of such a policy in Kenya when the Imperial Government had accepted the Mandate of Tanganyika and other ex-German colonies on the condition that there should be no discrimination against any nation. But the emphasis laid upon the

¹ *British Policy in Kenya Colony*, by Dr. Marjorie Dilley, 1937.

paramountcy of native interests served as a plausible consideration for exercising "some further control over immigration."

All this was partially satisfactory to the European community in Kenya. Its spokesmen, however, expressed regret that their proposal for racial segregation by legislative enactment was not accepted, and that Indian representation on the Legislative Council was disproportionately large. The Convention, while accepting the terms of the settlement, reserved the right to re-open those items which were unsatisfactory to the Europeans.

To the Indians the settlement was a clear demonstration of their inferior political status. The Rt. Hon. Srinivas Sastri, speaking for the Indian delegation in London, rejected the terms of the settlement and declared most emphatically that the Imperial Government had yielded to powerful pressure from the European community in Kenya.

In the special session of the Indian National Congress in 1923, discussions in regard to the position of the Indians in East Africa led to the adoption of some forms of propaganda by means of which the general public in India might be made to realise the illusion of Imperial citizenship. It was resolved:

"The decision of the British Government on the Kenya question having made it clear that it is not possible for India to have an equal and honourable place in the British Empire, the All-India Congress Committee is of the opinion that there should be a solemn demonstration throughout India to mark the event."

Accordingly a day of protest announced by the Congress was celebrated with customary *hartals*, processions and open-air speeches. Leaders urged the people to abstain from participation in all Imperial functions, including the exhibition at Wembley. In Kenya, the Indian community resorted to passive resistance by non-payment of the Poll Tax.

The Legislative Assembly in Delhi initiated debates on the White Paper and gave expression to the general public opinion, which regarded the policy of exclusion of Indians from the Highlands as being based on racial and not economic grounds. In view of the hostile attitude of the Europeans in Kenya, the immigration question might also be liable to discrimination in practice. The official reply to the debates was, of course, that the settlement

was a decision arrived at by the British Cabinet, and therefore there was no question as to whether or not the Indians would accept the terms of settlement. On point of order, motions against the acceptance of the White Paper were refused by the Government of India.¹

With the advent of a Labour Government in England, it was decided that a committee from India should come to London and examine afresh the nature and extent of the grievances of Indians in Kenya. The Indian members of the Committee soon discovered that the leaders of the Labour Party, while they poured out sympathy with "idealistic salvos," were as indifferent to an equitable solution of the problem as those belonging to the Conservative and Liberal ranks. On two fundamental issues, relating to franchise and reservation of the Highlands for European settlement, the decision of the Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. H. Thomas, conformed to that of the White Paper of 1923. He suggested that an area be reserved in the lowlands for agricultural immigrants from India.

Meanwhile the attitude of the Government of India had changed. They made it clear to Indians that, in bringing about a settlement with the Colonial Office, they were not "high contracting parties" but would only act, if necessary, as advocates in those matters which in their judgment appeared to be justifiable.

III

The repeated failure of the Indian delegation to reverse the decision of the White Paper of 1923, despite the support of the Government of India, exasperated the Indians in Kenya. As a protest against the adoption of a communal system of representation, they refused to elect members to the Legislative Council until 1925, and when they did so, they announced that they were not thereby prejudicing their claims to the common roll. The leaders of Indian Committees lacked political training and showed no self-reliance in their struggle. In 1929, when the Hilton-Young Commission, to which we shall presently refer, suggested that a system of equal representation should be the ideal for the Government of Kenya, the Indians withdrew from the Council in the hope that their action would underline the recommendation of

¹ Indian Legislative Assembly Debates, 1923.

the Commission. They failed to see that the Hilton-Young Report was concerned with the task of interpreting the principle of paramountcy, which aimed at securing the Europeans against their claims, and also with the finding of plausible arguments in favour of the "Dual Policy," which was advanced to secure the interests of the settlers against those of the natives.

We need not dwell upon the plethora of discussions and debates over the interpretation of "paramountcy" and the "Dual Policy."¹ The dispute over the "Indian question" in Kenya awakened public interest in England and raised the constitutional position of East Africa and adjoining British possessions. Is this territory to be governed by an oligarchy of European planters or should there be a beginning of a representative form of Government? How should the organised demands of the European vested interests be reconciled to the doctrine of imperial trusteeship for Africans? The direction of a policy based upon paramountcy of native interests—if that policy is interpreted as meaning that the development of the African should be a "first charge" on the Administration—cannot be left to an oligarchy. Yet nothing should be done to antagonise the European settlement in East Africa. In 1927 the Colonial Office sought to clear its point of view by issuing a White Paper² in which it was declared that His Majesty's Government "adhere to the underlying principles of the White Paper of 1923 entitled '*Indians in Kenya*' (Cmd. 1922) both in regard to the political status and other rights of British Indian residents in East Africa and also as regards the imperial duty of safeguarding the interests and progress of the native population as trustees for their welfare until such time as they can take part more fully in their own government and in the common affairs of all races inhabiting these territories. At the same time, they wish to place on record their view that while these responsibilities of trusteeship must for a long time rest mainly on the agents of the Imperial Government they desire to associate more closely in this high and honourable task those who, as

¹ The "Dual policy" has not, however, prevented the Colonial Empire from being what a conservative Evening paper in London describes as "Imperial Slums." It writes: "When Britain wrapped about her mantle of imperial dominion, we undertook the responsibility for the care of these peoples, for their homes and the lives of their little children. We have failed. Our rule has not brought happiness. Our flag has not meant a new and more bountiful life. It has spelt neglect and shame and degradation." (*Evening Standard*, July 26, 1939.)

² Cmd. 2904, 1927.

colonists or residents, have identified their interests with the prosperity of the country." For our purpose it is interesting to note Professor Keith's comments on the proposals set forth in this White Paper. He said that it subordinated both Native and Indian interests to those of the Europeans, and marked "a distinct deterioration of British conceptions of fair play to Native populations."¹

The White Paper was followed by the appointment of a Commission, under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Hilton-Young, M.P. now Lord Kennet, to consider how the East African British possessions might be brought into closer union, so that the Imperial Government might adequately discharge its responsibility as impartial arbiter between communities in these territories. We need not discuss in detail the proposals of the Commission, which of course reiterated the principle of ultimate trusteeship of the Imperial Government in matters affecting the interests of the native, but stated that the paramountcy of native interests should not be interpreted so as to ignore the just claims of the European community. The majority report of the Commission (the Chairman dissenting), in elaborating a somewhat complex constitution for these colonies, supported the plea of the Indians for a common electoral roll.

The Imperial Government appeared to favour this ideal, but held the view that the time had not come for making a substantial change in the structure of the East African Legislatures. Once again the Government of India invited the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri to visit East Africa and to suggest a compromise which might result in a mutual understanding between the Indians and the European community. Mr. Sastri reiterated the demands¹ of the Indian community and suggested that the Government of India should, in order to arrest the unseemly demonstration of racial discrimination within the Empire, take steps to secure the following:

- (1) Impartial inquiries as to the basis of a franchise common to all races alike.
- (2) Acceptance of a common roll.

¹ *Responsible Government*, by A. B. Keith, 1928.

² Report of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri regarding his mission to East Africa, 1930.

- (3) Opposition to the demand of the European community for the grant of responsible government and also to the establishment of a Central Council proposed by Sir Samuel Wilson: but in the event of the establishment of such a body, the unofficial representative from each province should include an adequate number of Indians.
- (4) The continuance of the official majority in the Legislative Council of Kenya.

However, in view of the wide divergence of political outlook between the two communities in East Africa, the Government of India were not able to secure a satisfactory settlement of the Indian question in East Africa. As a result of the Hilton-Young Commission, only the nominated representative of native interests were increased, from one to two, in 1934.

Under the pressure of public opinion in England, however, the Colonial Office, then under Lord Passfield, published its decision in 1930¹ in two Command papers, namely a detailed memorandum on Native Policy and conclusions regarding "closer union," in which the Imperial Government made certain concessions to the natives of East Africa. They were as follows:

- (a) Africans were to be allowed to grow coffee.
- (b) Land could be held on individual tenure.
- (c) Taxation would be graded according to wealth.
- (d) Equality of treatment would be accorded to all.

Every section of the European population in all parts of Africa protested against such concessions. They declared that equal rights between the white and the coloured communities were impossible because "there was no ground for equality," and the European Convention in Kenya announced that the acceptance of these concessions by the Government of the Colony would involve the amendments of at least thirty-one Ordinances!

In the midst of such temper, and with the emergence of constitutional issues involved in the proposal for a "closer union" of all British possessions in East and Central Africa, the Indian question receded into the background. "In any case, the Indian demand for equality disturbed European 'paramountcy', called attention to the needs and interests of other communities, and led

¹ Cmd. 3573 and 3574, 1930.

to the subsequent adoption of a policy which officially included them.”¹ Since the Joint-Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament, appointed in 1931 to consider the entire constitutional position in East Africa, came to the conclusion that a radical change in its government was both unnecessary and impracticable at the moment, the European community settled down to find ways and means of extending their sphere of influence within the limits of the existing constitution and administration. Meanwhile, the Committee recommended an array of Commissions for investigating the problem relating to finance, railway rates, judicial organisation and native claims to agricultural land. We are not concerned here with the results of these investigations; but it cannot be disputed that they have given substantial guidance to the Government of East Africa and to the European community in devising methods for the promotion of their vital interests, and for the replacement of the Indians by the natives. It is admitted that the serious obligation resting on those responsible for the government of East Africa is to take steps for the economic development of these territories. But how would it be possible to achieve this objective if the policy of the Government be not directed towards establishing equilibrium between interests of all communities? Wherein would lie the unity of all the parts of the economic system if sectional interests were allowed to advance at the expense of those who are not adequately organised? And without this unity even a rational economic measure becomes liable to aggravate ill-feeling between communities.

This may be illustrated by the Indian opposition to the Native Produce Market Ordinance No. 28 of 1935, introduced by the Government with a view to regulating the system of marketing. The purpose of the legislation is to mitigate the evils of unrestricted speculation, to control certain practices of middlemen, and to help the primary producer; but the Indian trader suspects that these measures are mainly adopted to restrict his freedom and to advance “purely European interests.” Since the real basis of his relations in the political and social spheres is one of inferior status, and since it is declared that the policy of discrimination against him is not due only to race and colour but to economic considerations, he feels that any adjustment to the economic form and

¹ *British Policy in Kenya Colony*, by Dr. Marjorie Dilley, 1937.

organisation of the Colony is designed to thwart his long-earned position in its economic life.

Therefore the most obvious solution of the conflict between the Indian and European communities in East Africa is to eliminate such contradictions as are inherent in the denial of the rights of equal citizenship to the Indians, whose initiative, knowledge, moral and material resources are invaluable assets in the development of the Colony. However, the Indian agitation against the Order-in-Council reserving the Highlands for the white settlers continued and one of the prominent British landlords in Kenya, Lord Francis Scott, declared: "We want to make it perfectly clear to everyone that we are not going to tolerate any interference. We will not tolerate interference from local Indians, the Government of India, or any one else in that particular question."¹

Thus the position of Indians in East Africa is similar to that in South Africa. Here Indians are despised; they are relegated to an inferior status on unjustifiable grounds, and are even denied equality in the Court of Justice. Even the highly cultured Indians are not allowed an entry into European clubs and hotels. As regards the benefits of social services, nothing whatever has happened to indicate that the rights of equal citizenship have been extended to the native and Indian communities. The communal franchise is retained, and out of 38 members of the Legislative Council, 32 are Europeans and only 5 are Indians. They are there to bear the burden of direct and indirect taxes so that the European may be "relatively fortunate" in its lightness.² Most of them in townships are obliged to live in an environment comparable to a ghetto, and then the cry is raised that "the Indian bazaar is the centre of infection" and therefore the policy of segregation is justifiable! In another chapter, where we discuss the life and labour of the Indians in the Empire overseas, we shall refer to the problem of health and sanitation. Here we quote (from Dr. Norman Leys' book on Kenya) an incident, and leave the reader to draw the conclusion.

"In March 1931 an Indian boy of thirteen went off for a joy-ride on a motor-bicycle that was neither licensed nor had a

¹ *The Times*, Jan. 25, 1938.

² "An extraordinary situation has arisen in places like Kenya, the Rhodesias and South Africa where the black community, poor as it is, has actually been taxed for educating white children and paying the expenses of a Government carried on mainly for the whites." Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, *Foreign Affairs*, October, 1938.

silencer. The third count against the boy was that he had no driving licence. He was tried, convicted on all three counts, the bicycle having neither licence nor silencer and the boy no licence, and sentenced to four strokes with the cane on each count, or twelve in all. The boy's father pleaded with the magistrate to fine him instead of flogging his son, because the flogging would interfere with the boy's future, especially at school. But the twelve strokes were inflicted, and the father wrote to the Press, obviously in deep distress, sending with the letter a medical certificate to prove how seriously the boy had been injured by the flogging.

But the hurt that went to the hearts of all the Indians in Kenya, and of many thousands of Indians in other countries, for the case and the father's letter of protest were widely copied in the Press outside Kenya, was their knowledge of the fact that no Court in East Africa ever sentences a grown man, if he is a European, let alone a child, to a flogging, for even the most brutal crime, and Europeans in Africa commit brutal crimes at least as often as Asiatics or Africans. Every Indian in Kenya knows that if this mischievous prank had been committed by a European boy of thirteen, all that would have happened would have been a visit or a letter of warning to the father from a European police officer."

IV

We now turn to a brief survey of the position of Indians in Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar—the group of British dependencies adjoining Kenya.

The occupation of *Uganda* by the British in 1893 led to a serious mutiny of the Sudanese, which was "suppressed by the help of Indian soldiers." The economic exploitation of the country then began, as usual, with the immigration of Asiatic labour. What has been achieved by Indian immigrants is recorded by Sir Harry Johnston in the report on the Uganda Protectorate. He wished them "unlimited success" in the colony, because they "created trade, first in a small way and then in a large way, where no trade has hitherto existed." Recognising the importance of Indian trade, enterprise and emigration in the task of colonization, Sir Harry observed that "East Africa is and should be from every point of view the America of the Hindu."

Indeed, at the time Sir Harry Johnston was engaged, as Special

Commissioner, in a stock-taking of the Colony, there were as many as 20,484 Indian labourers employed in diverse activities for the development of Uganda. The construction of the railway was undertaken on the assurance from the Government of India that they would supply the requisite labour, provided that every emigrant labourer was repatriated at the expense of the Colony, if he so desired, at the termination of his contract.

It was estimated at the time of the 1931 census that there were over 13,000 Indians in Uganda, nearly 24 per cent. of whom were born in the Colony. About 60 per cent. of the Indian population are now permanently settled there. The predominance of Indian interests in the Protectorate is largely due to its commercial history, as well as to the character of agricultural production. The Indian traders have in their hands as much as 90 per cent. of the total trade. The reason is not far to seek. "While the openings made available for Indians have necessarily been limited by admission of the natives' insurmountable title to adequate land for all legitimate purposes, they have been unlimited where commerce is concerned. As a result, the retail trade, particularly that which is conducted with the native population, and the cotton industry and others having an agricultural basis but requiring middlemen in their organisation are preponderantly in Indian hands. The caravan had hardly become obsolete before the Indian depot with its subordinate stores came into being."¹

The main crop of commercial value is cotton, the average annual production of which exceeds 250,000 bales of 400 lb. The trade connected with its export is almost entirely controlled by Indians and other Asiatics. As much as 91 per cent. of Uganda's cotton is exported to Bombay. About 153 ginning mills out of the total of 194 are owned by Indians, and a considerable share of the internal trade is also in the hands of our thrifty traders from Gujrat and Bombay. It is reported that in one small town a single Indian merchant sold in one season over 5,000 bicycles! In Uganda, as in other parts of East Africa, the Indian trader functions as "an essential medium" in the distribution of imported and indigenous commodities. Apart from commercial enterprise, a number of Indians find employment as artisans and clerks on the railways. They are not, however, given permanent employment in public services.

¹ H. B. Thomas and R. Scott, *Uganda*, 1935.

The climatic conditions in any part of the territory are not suitable, as they are in Kenya, for permanent European settlement. Although there are restrictive clauses in leases recently granted to Indian settlers, the discriminative tendency has not as yet developed into such an acute form as in Kenya. Perhaps, under the circumstances of economic life in the Uganda Protectorate, emphasis on racial bar is inconvenient.

"The country owes much to the Indian trader," observed the Report of the Uganda Development Commission, "and we consider that a broad policy of toleration should be adopted towards him. He has shown energy and enterprise, and has assisted in the opening up of the more remote districts. He is also of value as an agriculturist, and his activities in this direction might well be encouraged."

Indians are allowed to possess lands and there are some sixty large Indian estates cultivating over 21,000 acres. An Indian landlord also runs a large sugar-cane plantation. There are also two sugar factories, with a total putput of about 10,000 tons per annum, which are owned and managed by Indians.

But this encouragement to attract a few Indian capitalists does not altogether mean a departure from the general principle of racial segregation. Lord Milner's decisions in regard to the position of Indians in Kenya were announced simultaneously in Nairobi and Entebbe, and consequently raised the racial issue in Uganda. The colour bar for Indians is there in the railways and lake steamers, in schools and hospitals; but racial discrimination was not applied to Japanese, who represent a sovereign nation. They cannot be treated as helots!

Immigration, though subject to strict control, has neither a racial nor a national bias. The Immigration Restriction and Removal of Undesirables Ordinance, 1913, and the Immigration Rules, 1934, are measures directed to prohibit the entry of individuals who would be regarded as undesirable in any civilized community; or who, for financial reasons, would be likely to become a charge on public funds.

The Indians in the Protectorate who succeed in becoming partners in imperial designs fall in with the Europeans in the exploitation of the African. Indian planters did not, for example, hesitate to join the European community in persuading the Government of Uganda to pass the Masters and Servants Ordin-

ance, which aimed at facilitating the recruitment of contract labour. Again, when the Uganda Development Commission, a body composed of European and Indian capitalists, recommended such measures which Indians themselves once upon a time regarded as just grievances, no word of protest came from Indian opinion. The recommendations were as follows:

- (1) That all Natives should be registered with the police and made to carry a card of identification;
- (2) That those who voluntarily went out to work should pay less taxes than those who stayed at home and worked for themselves;
- (3) That the hawkers and market sellers should be so heavily taxed that they would be driven out of business (Ordinance No. 24 of 1932);
- (4) That all single men should be made to go out and work for two months every year,

and finally,

- (5) That all employers should agree upon a uniform wage tariff, which should be fixed at a minimum.

On the other hand, any necessary economic measure adopted in the general interest of the Colony and its natives is often interpreted as being deliberately designed on the part of the Administration to prejudice the position of Indians as traders. The control of marketing of the native produce throughout East Africa, for example, is aimed at the curtailment of a long chain of middlemen who undoubtedly bring about reckless competition and fraudulent practices in the disposal of cotton, coffee, sugar, oilseeds, etc. It would seem unnecessary to have 194 ginneries for the purpose of handling Uganda cotton, the maximum production of which is about 290,000 bales of 400 lb. A system of licensing has not been successful in mitigating the evils of unregulated markets, and therefore the Government of Uganda promulgated an Ordinance in 1932 on somewhat similar lines to the measure adopted in Kenya in 1926. But the measure was received with an outburst of opposition from Indian capitalists and traders.

There is no political franchise in Uganda, but two Indians have been nominated to the Legislative Council, which is purely an advisory body. The Indian community is, however, dissatisfied

with this method of representation, and demands a franchise based on education and property qualifications without any distinction of colour or creed. Indians are, however, eligible for membership of municipal councils and enjoy municipal franchise.

The ex-German colony of *Tanganyika* is one of the Mandated¹ Territories which came under the control of the British Government after the first World War. About 860 German plantations, covering a total area of about $2\frac{3}{4}$ million acres, were confiscated by the Mandatory Power, and a greater part of this land was sold by auction to British, Indian and Greek settlers. The non-British owners felt secure against any form of racial discrimination under the conditions stipulated in the mandate. As a matter of fact, *Tanganyika* has always been regarded by Indian immigrants as a promising colony for them. Here they met with no resistance or discouragement from the Germans, and they found the agrarian system favourable to settlement.

There are over 25,000 Indians in *Tanganyika*. While their main occupation is the retail trade, a large part of the Indian population is engaged in various skilled and semi-skilled types of work. As buyers of indigenous products and sellers of imported manufactured goods, the Indian merchants hold rather an important position in the Colonial trade and commerce. Most of the ginneries are owned by Indians, and consequently they are large employers of African labour. Then there is a class of Indians who pursue the flourishing occupation of usury, using the traditional methods favoured by the circumstances of the life and labour of the natives; high rate of interest, sinister means of involving the native in heavy debts, controlling the marketing of his crops. The Indian land proprietors, owners of ginneries, shopkeepers and moneylenders provide a considerable proportion of the capital invested by the native in agricultural pursuits.

But it is the predominant position of the Indian middlemen and traders which has brought them into conflict with the European trading class. On the plea that marketing agencies with government subsidies would be beneficial to the State, they sought to eliminate the Indian middlemen, so that the supply of raw materials from the Colony to destinations outside the British Empire might be controlled; on the other hand, the monopoly of the trade would strengthen the position of the British trading

¹ See Appendix B.

community. The declared object of the Tanganyika Native Produce Bill passed by the Government was "to make provision for the encouragement and control of native agriculture and industry and the marketing of the products thereof." The Agricultural Produce Board, set up by the Government, controlled both production and distribution of any agricultural produce that they might declare as a "regulated product." There was no reason to oppose such a measure if it had any prospect of reducing the chain of middlemen and of improving the economic life of the primary producers. But it failed to bring about and maintain an equilibrium among all interests. Indians and Natives were not wrong in their suspicion that the Bill was designed primarily to benefit the British traders and merchants, and hence their opposition to this Bill.

Contrary to the letter and spirit of the Mandate, a number of Ordinances (e.g. Trade Licenses Ordinance, Non-Native Poll-tax Ordinance) have been issued by the Government of Tanganyika for fiscal purposes, which set aside the equal property rights of Indian and Greek settlers. They claim that the "Non-Native Poll-tax" is unfair to the small Indian traders, and that the system of Trade Licences restricts their scope for exchanging indigenous products for the essential requirements of the native population. The Mandatory Government defended these Ordinances as being revenue measures, and declared that the tax levied was neither excessive nor in any respect designed to offer any preferential advantage to the European community or to any monopolistic concession. The petition of the Indian community in Tanganyika to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League bore no fruitful results, because the Mandatory Power defended these measures on the ground that they did not constitute a derogation from the essential basis of Mandatory principles. As a matter of fact, in the estimation of the British Government, the Mandated territories were nothing less than their own colonies. In opening the first session of the Legislative Council of Tanganyika in 1927, Sir Donald Cameron interpreted the Mandate as follows:

"There is no provision in the Mandate for its termination or transfer. It constitutes merely an obligation, and not a form of temporary tenure, under the League of Nations. . . . Tanganyika is a part of the British Empire and will remain so."

The truth behind the movement for union with Kenya or the agitation in support of a sort of East African Federation is that the British settlers and traders feel the need of ensuring the British sovereignty in the Mandate and of consolidating their own position *vis à vis* the Imperial Government. With a view to arresting the influx of immigration, they have raised the amount of deposit payable by the immigrants, and in conformity with their policy in Kenya they aim at keeping the Highlands in reserve for Europeans, although no *direct* measure can be adopted so long as the colony remains under the Mandate. Here a reference to the rights of occupancy of land in Tanganyika may be of interest. Under the Mandate, it is laid down in Article 6 that in enacting agrarian legislation the rights and interests of the native population should be borne in mind and that "no rights were to be created in favour of non-natives." But large estates were sold to non-native owners during the period between 1920 and 1924, and the East Africa Commission of 1925 laid emphasis on the suitability of non-native enterprise in the highlands of the North-east and South-west of Tanganyika. Already in 1924 the Government had disposed of nearly 17,000 acres in these parts with a view to encouraging "non-native settlement," and, after 1925, Germans were allowed to return to their unsold estates and within four years came to possess nearly 350 holdings. And yet Lord Milner's proposal for agricultural settlement by demobilized Indian soldiers was not acceptable. In short, the colonial administration in East Africa favoured European colonization somewhat on the traditional lines adopted in the Kenya Highlands, although the Mandatory Government could not openly sponsor such a land policy. "Frankly speaking, the Government finds itself confronted with a very grave difficulty. It is the translation into action of its desire to keep Highlands and other fertile lands reserved for British settlers till it becomes in a position to refuse the non-native his right under the Mandate to own any land in the country."¹

In this scramble for the acquisition of land, Indians have, however, managed to secure a share, as shown in the following table:

¹ *The Tanganyika Herald*, 19th February, 1934.

TABLE IV

Acreege of Agricultural and Pastoral land held by non-natives
(in round figures)

	1931	1936
British	755,000	675,000
Germans	389,000	454,000
Indians	327,000	283,000

As regards political rights, three out of ten seats filled by nomination are allotted to Indians in the Legislative Council. Such concessions do not, however, contribute much to the improvement of the status of Indians generally. They are employed only in the lower grades of government service, and Indian residents complain that racial discrimination against them has already become a source of friction between the two communities. We must recognise the fact that the government administering a colony, be it a conquered territory or a mandate, can always favour the nationals of the metropolis.

Zanzibar came under British "protection" towards the end of the nineteenth century, although, according to Sir Richard Burton, some half-a-dozen merchants and planters had lived there since 1804 "on terms of intimacy" with the Sultan. It was an Arab sultanate, the seat of which had originally been at Muscat in Arabia. Here, as elsewhere in the Colonial Empire, Great Britain's policy of expansion began with chartered trading concerns which managed to obtain concessions from ruling authorities. Indian traders were there before the establishment of the British Protectorate over the Sultanate. In 1874 their number in Zanzibar and on the East African coast was estimated at about 4,000, as against 24 Europeans. Here, as in other parts of East Africa, the Indian Traders carried on a large volume of trade, estimated at a value exceeding $1\frac{1}{2}$ million sterling annually.

Zanzibar has a very convenient harbour, which provides an "excellent anchorage fronting town." Sir Charles Eliot considers it as "perhaps the richest and most beautiful spot in tropical Africa." The chief attraction in this colony is the clove; and over 88 per cent. of the world's production comes from there. The immigrant communities, consisting largely of the British, Indians from the Gujrat and Bombay, and Arabs, carry on this extensive

clove trade. Of the total population of over 15,000 Indians, about 60 per cent. are permanently settled in Zanzibar, and they have contributed much to the economic life of the Colony.

The administration of the Protectorate is vested in an Executive Council, and out of six unofficial members of the Legislative Council, two seats are allotted to Indian nominees.

The conflict between European and non-European traders arose over the clove trade. The European settlers in Zanzibar sought to create a monopoly under state control, in order to drive out the Indians from the business, in the development of which they had laboured so long. A series of Ordinances were issued for the purpose, which gave rise to an almost interminable dispute between the Indian merchants and the Government of the Colony. One suspects that the underlying motive of these efforts was also to disturb the friendly relations between the Indians and the Arabs. The Zanzibar Clove Bill came into operation in August, 1937. As a measure of retaliation, Indian dealers decided to resort to passive resistance.

"Officials who are most of all responsible for this new legislation," wrote the late Rev. C. F. Andrews after his visit to Zanzibar, "which curtails the rights of Indians in Zanzibar, acknowledged quite freely to me that the Ordinances recently passed controlling the clove market and making it impossible for Indians to obtain any freehold of clove estates, would hit the resident Indians very hard and might even reduce their numbers in Zanzibar, because their occupation would be gone. But they were prepared for this, because the clove market on which Zanzibar relied, was in a desperate condition."

But it is well to recognise the fact that the Administration of the Colony is largely dependent upon the clove industry and that the present situation has come to pass owing to the top-heavy and extravagant character of the bureaucracy. Sir Alan Pim pointed out how the bureaucracy set up in Zanzibar by the Colonial Office was on the verge of bankruptcy. He said: "Zanzibar cannot afford a European staff on this scale. It is only the fatal ease with which the funds have come in from the clove industry which has tempted the Administration into this easy and seductive course."

Unmindful of the consequences of imposing discriminative Ordinances, the Government of Zanzibar sought to adopt a

policy which would have affected, not only the life and labour of those concerned in the production and distribution of cloves, but would have accentuated racial prejudices. Although the dispute was ended by an agreement between the Government and the Indian merchants, as a result of intervention by the Indian National Congress, which declared a boycott of Zanzibar cloves, it served as an example of the precarious position of Indians in this colony.

Despite their peaceful agitation, acute racial antagonism was aroused and the officials deliberately encouraged anti-Indian rivalries. Although they were instructed to "avoid any action likely to give rise to inter-racial friction" the Administration made the following admission. It writes: "when opinion is divided on racial lines it is impossible for Government to prevent statements being made, even by its own officers, which especially if misunderstood, misinterpreted, misquoted or misrepresented as is occasionally inevitable, may not give offence or arouse resentment between races." Indians are now apprehensive of an organised attempt to exclude them from participation in the economic life of the country by denial of equality of opportunities. The provision that no Indian can purchase land without the sanction of the Executive, for instance, amounts to restrictions such as prevail in Kenya.

Chapter Four

INDIANS IN OTHER BRITISH COLONIES

I

We now survey the position of the Indians in British colonies other than those of East Africa. These colonies are all situated in the tropical region, and consequently Indian immigration and settlement have played a conspicuous part in their development.

Of these colonies, we will first mention *Mauritius*, an island in the Indian Ocean. It is the half-way house between Asia and Africa; and it was the first British colony to receive indentured labour from India, in 1834. Indian emigration had, however, begun as early as 1819 and provided a source of efficient labour for sugar-cane plantations. The flow of emigrants increased immediately after the passing of the Act of Emancipation by Great Britain in 1833. "Between 1834 and 1837 as many as 7,000 emigrants left Calcutta for Mauritius."¹

The conditions of recruitment under indenture for Mauritius differed from the usual system, in that there was a stipulation that the emigrant had not the freedom to return to his country even after the expiration of his period of contract. It was in this way that the sugar estates, then badly hit by the abolition of slavery, could be assured of an abundant supply of cheap labour. The State came forward and adopted measures calculated to favour the extension of capitalistic enterprises. Official supervision of the methods of immigration was instituted in 1842, when emigration agents in India and a Protector of Immigrants in the Colony were appointed. In 1878 a new Labour Law was passed which gave increased powers to the Protector of Immigrants and provided also for medical inspection and a general regulation of wages and circumstances attendant on plantation labour. The system known as "Morecellement," or parcelling of land, was adopted with a view to inducing labourers to become peasant proprietors; nevertheless, the general conditions of labour obtaining in plantations gave rise to grave discontent. Following the recommendation of the Sanderson Committee, immigration from India was dis-

¹ Bajpai, *Indian Immigration*.

continued in 1910. In 1923-34, there was a fresh recruitment under the scheme of assisted emigration, but since then there has been no immigration of Indian labourers into the Colony. While immigration regulations are favourable to Indians, the Labour Ordinances operating in the island have not proved sufficiently attractive to them.

Nearly 70 per cent. of the total population in the Colony are Indians, and the extent to which they have acclimatised themselves in this favourable tropical region is seen by the steady growth of persons born in the island.

TABLE V

Indian Population in Mauritius

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of Indians</i>	<i>Born in India</i>	<i>Born in Mauritius</i>
1911	258,211	35,349	222,862
1921	265,884	17,056	248,828
1931	281,000	19,190	261,810

contributed to agriculture
 A large proportion of the Indians in Mauritius are farm-labourers on the sugar plantations. Since the breaking up of large estates into small holdings they have been able to own or lease sufficient land, which they cultivate themselves. Thus, the steady growth of Indian peasant proprietors and the system of cultivation which they have adopted have contributed largely to the general prosperity of the island. The structure of agricultural economy is, however, extremely defective. While subsistence farming is no longer adequate for the needs of to-day, the dependence of the farming communities upon the imports of essential foodstuffs and other necessities of life is to be deplored. The cultivation of sugar-cane absorbs most of the arable land, and consequently the colonists demand preferential rates on Mauritius sugar; but the prosperity of the Colony cannot be preserved by such measures. Here backward agricultural populations, Indians and natives alike, need better opportunities for developing subsistence farming.

The other occupation of Indian settlers is trade, which is shared between Indian and Mauritian shopkeepers. Three sugar factories are owned by Indians, but the great bulk of the sugar production is in the hands of the European planters and manufacturers.

The Indians' share in the economic life of the island, apart from agriculture, was stated by Sir Virgile Naz in an address before the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture in 1891, and his account is accurate in many respects even at the present day:

"... The cultivation of vegetables and fruit, the production of milk, and the hawking of all these necessities of life, are exclusively in the hands of the Indian population. Without them, the prices of vegetables, fruit, milk, etc., would rise considerably, and the cost of living in Mauritius would become much greater. As carters, cabmen, and in cognate capacities, the Indians play a most useful part, and can claim credit for the cheapening of the cost of transport. The same people form the vast majority of domestic servants and washermen throughout the island. It cannot, therefore, be contended that those of the Indians who are not employed on the estates... constitute a burden on the Colonial Treasury. . . ."¹

The Indian community enjoys the advantage of municipal franchise, but it is represented in the Legislative Council only by two out of nine nominated seats. The question of racial segregation has not as yet risen and it is to be hoped that occupational rivalry may not dislocate the partial equilibrium that exists in the Colony within its communal life.

II

Historians tell us that "India was the first historic civilizer of the *Malay Peninsula*, and her leading seamen of ancient times were the Tamils of Southern India." Records show that about the seventh century, the Pallavas from the Coromandel Coast came to trade in the Peninsula and left traces of their culture in legend and folk-literature. Subsequently, Moslem leaders from Western India followed and were instrumental in spreading the Islamic faith among the people.

The employment of Indian labour in plantations in the Malayan Peninsula began in 1833, or perhaps a little earlier. Indian labourers from Madras, chiefly Tamils and Telegus, were first brought in by the sugar and coffee planters under indenture to work for three years at a wage agreed upon at the time of their

Quoted in *Mauritius Illustrated*, 1914.

engagement. The Government of the Straits Settlements established a depot at Negapatam in the Madras Presidency for recruiting indentured labour. Indian convicts had been employed before then in building up the British settlements in Singapore, Penang and Malacca. The erection of St. Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore, which is regarded as "one of the finest specimens of ecclesiastical architecture of the East" was largely the work of convict labour, whose employment reduced the estimated cost of the Cathedral from Rs. 120,932 to Rs. 47,916 only.

Malaya is one of the richest British Colonies, yielding nearly half of the world's total shipments of rubber and over 30 per cent. of the total production of tin ore. The ownership of these two industries was shared primarily between the British and the Chinese capitalists, but post-1918 developments have brought the control of rubber estates and tin industry increasingly under the control of European companies.

The conditions for emigration of Indian labour to Malaya were not satisfactory; but with the growth of the rubber plantation industry, it became necessary to ensure and regulate the supply of cheap labour. The comparative proximity of two densely populated areas, namely, the Presidency of Madras and Southern China, provided the rubber estates and tin mines with a potential and an actual source of labour. While the average number of arrivals from India was usually about 20,000 from 1880 to 1904, the figure rose to 90,000 a year from 1911 to 1920.

Since the transfer of the Straits Settlement to the Colonial Office in 1867, the influx of Indian immigration has been continuous, under an organised system of recruitment. The Government of India exercised certain measures of supervision over emigration, in order to mitigate the evils associated with speculative professional recruitment. The Indian labourers were employed both upon Government works and private concerns, but the bulk of the emigrants found employment in plantations. They reclaimed the forest areas, constructed roads, and started rubber plantations at a time when the Malayan could not be persuaded to work under the conditions offered by the colonial exploiters. Most of the Indian immigrants were drawn from South India, where poverty and malnutrition had already reduced their stamina to such a degree that they became easy victims to the scourge of malaria. According to the Census of 1931, Sikhs,

Muslim Jats, Pathans and labourers from the United Provinces and Bengal also form a part of the Indian population in Malaya.

In 1890, a Commission was appointed to enquire into the state of labour in the undeveloped areas of the Peninsula, and its deliberations revealed: (a) that the supply was insufficient, partly due to the defective method of recruiting adopted by professional labour agents; (b) that the quality was unsatisfactory, owing to the enlistment of non-agricultural people, such as weavers, petty traders, cooks, laundry-men (*Dhobis*) and other artisans; and (c) that, in consequence of the monopoly exercised by professional recruiting organisations, the cost of imported labour was heavy. With a view to facilitating the supply of labour to the increasing areas of rubber plantations, all restrictions on emigration from India were removed in 1897. The Government of India exercised no control over it until March, 1923, except for a period during the first World War.

The recruitment of imported labour from India followed three different methods, namely: (1) indentured or contract labour; (2) labour recruited by a system, introduced by the rubber planters, known as the *Kangany*; and (3) "free labour" recruited by the proprietors of new estates through their own agents.

But the existence of multiple agencies for the supply of immigrant labour resulted in confusion, and it was felt that the creation of a common recruiting organisation for all planters would place the available labour supply at their command in a way most favourable from the viewpoint of colonial exploitation. In 1907, the Indian Immigration Committee was formed, and it was followed by the Indian Immigration Fund in 1908, derived from compulsory contributions from the employers requiring labour.

Two years later, the recruitment of the indentured labour from India was abolished, and the *Kangany* system developed into an important elaborate agency for a steady flow of cheap Indian labour. The main feature of this system of recruiting may be briefly stated. The word *Kangany* means a recruiter, but it is used in the sense that the recruiter is himself a plantation labourer. He is employed by his master to obtain not less than twenty labourers from India, and receives remuneration in the form of commission. Under the Indian Emigration Rules, 1923, a *Kangany* must be a South Indian of the agricultural classes who has been employed as a labourer for not less than three months under the employer

for whose services he desires to obtain emigrants from his own or neighbouring villages. Special licenses for these recruiting agents were introduced in order to check abuses, but the economic and social circumstances of the recruiting areas in Southern India are such that no effective protection can be given to illiterate, credulous and poor villagers against deception, maltreatment and injustice. Not only were they exposed to temporary hardships, but the system of recruitment and employment had all the features of serfdom. "The defects were," writes Professor Lennox Mills in his survey, "that it was very difficult to prevent the *Kangany* from making misrepresentations of 'squeezing' the coolies who were in his debt when they were employed in Malaya, and that the evil of crimping continued unabated."¹

But the number of recruits obtained by the *Kangany* showed a steady decline, and in 1929 about 37 per cent. of the adult Indian immigrants came to Malaya through the method of recruitment organised and developed by the majority of the rubber plantations. During the years following the economic depression immigration had to be suspended and a large proportion of labourers were repatriated. When the restrictions were relaxed in 1934, it was no longer necessary for well-established planters to employ *Kanganies* to obtain recruits from India. In 1937 only about 11 per cent. of immigrants were brought in by them. In the following year recruitment through them was abolished by the Government of India.

In addition to the seasonal influx of Indian immigrants, the Federated Malay States have a domiciled Indian population nearly seventy per cent. of which belongs to the labouring class.

There is a large colony of the chettiers, a professional money-lending class of South India, who provide credit facilities to the Indian and Chinese communities. A number of subordinate positions, chiefly as clerks (*Kerani*) in the Government service are also held by Indians. Nevertheless, the vast majority of them constitute an imported labouring class which has not been able to rise higher than the miserable status of "coolies." Thus, Indian communities form over 14 per cent. of the total population of Malaya. According to the Census of 1921, there has been an increase of nearly 76 per cent. in the Indian population over the figure obtained in 1911; but in the following decade the percentage of increase is only 32. The total Indian population is estimated in

¹ Lennox A. Mills, *British Rule in Eastern Asia*.

1939 at about 744,908, of whom nearly 45 per cent. were born in Malaya.

In 1922, the pressure of Indian public opinion led the Government of India to investigate the conditions of labour in Malaya, and in accordance with the Act of 1922, which came into force in 1923, certain changes were made in the Labour Code. The Act prohibits emigration "for the purpose of unskilled work except to such countries and on such terms and conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council might specify." An Agent was first appointed in 1923 by the Government of India for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the emigrants, and the Malayan Government set up an appropriate organisation in India in order to control the recruiting organisation. The Agent has the right to inspect estates where Indians are employed but he has no executive powers. All expenses incidental to the importation, repatriation and welfare of recruited labour are to be borne by the Indian Immigration Fund. "The wages paid to Indian labourers," writes the Agent of the Government of India in British Malaya, "are generally very much lower than the rates paid to the Chinese and other labourers. Indian labourers are in great demand in rubber estates by reason of the fact that they are most docile and amenable to discipline and are very cheap. There has been, however, quite recently an awakening among Indian labourers, and they have begun to demand higher wages."¹

But, owing to the fall in the price of rubber, a large number of Indians had to leave the plantations much against their will, and the Government of India encouraged this repatriation on the plea that the reduction of the wages below the standard fixed in the indentures, warranted by the circumstances of the rubber industry, would only create labour unrest in Malaya. However, the Chinese labourers, mainly engaged in the tin mines and in commerce, refused to be repatriated and maintained their position through some two hundred labour organisations which look after their interests.

Since the fluctuating supply of cheap Indian labour serves as a useful lever for regulating wages in plantations and mines, the European planters are averse to the creation of a permanent labour force in Malaya. Owing to the vigilance of Indian public

¹ Quoted in "International Migrations," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 1931, Vol. II.

opinion over schemes of assisted emigration and the growing demand for higher wages and other amenities of life, they threatened to replace Indian labour by the increasing influx of the Chinese. Since 1931, the British Malayan authorities have been negotiating with the Government of Java for a supply of labour. The Indian *labour* population in Malaya is estimated at about 596,000 including dependents.

But this opposition of the European planters and mine-owners to the creation of a settled labour force on the estates has resulted in grave social and moral disorders. The sex-ratio among the labourers employed outside the estates is low, the ratio being 227 females to 1,000 males. At the time of the 1931 Census, the sex ratio of the Indian population on the estates was 644 females per thousand males and there has been no substantial change during the last decade. And yet the Government of India have repeatedly exempted them from the operation of Rule 23 of the Indian Emigration Rules formulated in 1923. The Rule lays down that, "with regard to the emigration of unskilled labour, men who are unmarried or unaccompanied by their wives shall not be assisted to emigrate to any one country in any one year to a number exceeding one in five of the total number of persons assisted." On some rubber estates, labourers are provided with small allotments (usually one-sixteenth of an acre) for their own use; but this privilege has not even furnished the most frugal existence to the labourers, nor has it led to the stability of the labour force.

Settlement on the land by the descendants of the indentured labourers is largely controlled by the Nattukottai chettiers, who own some 175,000 acres. The conditions under which this land is leased out to tenants are such that no permanent benefit can be derived from it, and the primary producers are forced to live in a state of chronic economic servitude.

Once again Indian public opinion demanded a drastic intervention in the conditions of Indian labour in Malaya, and in 1936 the Government of India appointed Mr. Srinivasa Sastri to investigate the matter. In his Report he observed that there was no justification for preventing Indian labour from emigrating but the *Kangany* system which had earned a bad reputation among the labouring classes of Southern India should be discontinued. Perhaps the most important recommendation of his report was the need to introduce statutory standard wages in

all areas in Malaya. But the Government declined to accept his proposal.

As regards political rights, Indians are given representation on local bodies. In 1923, an Indian was nominated as a member of the Legislative Council, and in 1928 one found a place on the Federal Council. One of the non-official seats in the Legislative Council is held by a Chinese. In addition to the direct rule of the Colony, there are nine States which come under what is known as indirect rule. In any case, whatever the structure of the Government of Malaya, the Colony is situated on one of the Empire's strategic highways, and it will be jealously guarded by the Imperial Government, so that it is doubtful whether the institution of the so-called Federal Council will be anything more than a mere "deliberative" body. And Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Malaya, made this plain in his first address to the Federal Council in 1927. His Excellency observed: "In these days when democratic and socialist theories and doctrines are spreading like infection, bringing with them too often not peace but a sword, I feel it incumbent upon me to emphasise thus early in my allotted term of office, the utter inapplicability of any form of democratic or popular government to the circumstances of these States."

After the liberation of the Colony from the Japanese occupation, the Colonial Office decided to unite nine Malay States into what it called the Malayan Union. The formation of the Union was designed in the interest of the people, but the Malay National Movement regarded the particular methods chosen by the Imperial Government as "symbols of harsh imperialism." All sections of the diverse communities in Malaya are opposed to constitutional changes being made over their heads; but the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Creech Jones, declared in the House of Commons that the policy for the Malayan Union "was not imperialism, but an effort to carry out faithfully our economic liabilities."

We are not here concerned with the constitutional position of the Malay Peninsula *vis-a-vis* the Imperial Government. The fear that their policy of decentralisation might jeopardise the interests and rights of the Indian settlers was not allayed by the declaration of Sir Samuel Wilson, who was sent to Malaya by the Colonial Office in 1932. He suggested a settlement whereby the European

community who did not favour the scheme of decentralisation would be appeased. Sir Samuel said:

“The non-Malays, who have made Malaya the country of their adoption, form a loyal section of the community, and it has been the policy of the Government to accord full recognition of their status as British subjects (in the case of those born in the Colony) and British protected persons (in the case of those born in the Malay States). No one will deny the important part the non-Malays, who have made Malaya their home, have played in its development, and the share they are destined to take in helping its future progress. . . I take the view that the persons born in the Malay States of non-Malay parents (although only British Protected Persons) should be treated in those States in exactly the same way as persons born in the Colony of non-Malay parents (who are British subjects) and should have the same professional and business opportunities as European British subjects.”¹

In practice, however, the policy of the Government towards the non-Malay Asiatics has been to exclude them from all that is implied in their oft-repeated declaration assuring equality of status. Here, as elsewhere, the discriminative treatment is justified on the plea “that the welfare and well-being of the indigenous inhabitants must always be the first care of the Federal and State Governments.”

It is, however, necessary to remember that the non-Malayan races, most particularly Chinese, form the “economic backbone” of Malaya. The Malays themselves have not taken the advantage of those opportunities which are open to skill and industry in a country which furnishes half the world’s rubber and one-third of the world’s tin. While the interests of the Malays must be protected, the domiciled non-Malayan settlers have the just claim to a square deal. The policy of excluding the latter from the Malayan Civil Service was partly responsible for the growth of racial feeling in the peninsula. So far, the Imperial Government have failed to allay the fears and prejudices of the diverse communities through the basis of a common citizenship regardless of racial and religious differences.

¹ Report of Sir Samuel Wilson on Malaya, 1933.

III

The present position of *Burma vis-a-vis* the problem of immigration from India does not technically belong to the same category we have so far dealt with. For generations the peoples of these countries, like good neighbours, have grown up side by side sharing each other's cultural and economic developments. Migration from India took place long before the advent of the British rule. But their relations were made arbitrarily closer after the Third Burmese War (1886), when the British administered subject Burma as a "minor province" of subject India.

Migration into Burma increased considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century, when foreign markets were opened up to the trade in Burma rice. The clearing and cultivation of waste lands which followed upon the necessity for a rapid extension of the area under rice, and changed the country from a self-sufficing community to an exporting country, was largely carried out by Burmese peasants; but this transformation of economic life left a growing number of subsidiary occupations which could not be filled by the available supply of indigenous labour. Migration from India was therefore deliberately encouraged not only by the owners of the rice mills, who depended mainly on the private contractors for their supply of labour, but also by the Government of India. But these efforts to secure an adequate supply of cheap labour were somewhat divided in purpose. The Government was anxious to import Indians who would settle as cultivators; the capitalists, who discovered that coolies supplied by contractors were easier to manage than those recruited by government agencies under protection of the Labour Act of 1876, were wholly concerned with getting a supply of cheap, unskilled labour for the jobs which the Burmese could not or would not undertake. The cleavage which thus arose between Burmese skilled labour and immigrant unskilled labour is significant now as a cause of trouble between the two races; but in the early days of rapid expansion it could not be said that they were in competition with one another, for both were of vital importance to an agri-commercial economy, and each supplied the quota and variety of work to which it was accustomed, with mutual benefit.

The methods of labour recruitment and the rate of immigration were therefore inter-related from the beginning of this period, and took two forms : the mill manager had his agent or contractor to bring over the coolies from India; and Government, from 1876 onwards, set up a number of recruiting organisations to ensure the labour supply, which cost Burma many thousand pounds.

During the years 1876-8, however, over 15,000 Indians had come over as free settlers—a movement which was encouraged by the opening up of sea traffic and subsequent fierce price-cutting competition among the various shipping companies for the transport of immigrants. In 1880-1 more than 40,000 Indians arrived, of whom only 18,000 returned to India. Government, seeing the demand for imported labour, then offered various forms of subsidies, the later withdrawal of which resulted in an immediate but only temporary decline in the number of immigrants. Unsubsidised, the immigrant stream continued, and in 1927 had reached a peak of well over 400,000. The census returns in 1931 showed that Indians formed 6.9 per cent. of the total population.

During the last thirty-three years an average of twenty persons in every 100 have remained in Burma, many Indians coming originally with the intention of staying for about three years before revisiting the homeland, but returning to Burma for good after an average interval of about six months. This means that, in a little over thirty years, the population of Burma has been increased by more than a million Indians ; and of these Sir Thomas Couper has observed : " It is the number that stays behind in Burma which competes directly with the Burman labourer and tenant."¹

By 1931, out of the total labour force of Burma, Indians were contributing 11.6 per cent. and home races 7.4 per cent. of skilled labour ; in unskilled labour Indians supplied 57.4 per cent. and home races 18.5 per cent. " And, out of this large number of labourers, so many as 67,668 persons were born out of Burma and as a migrant population take little or no interest in the country, in her people, and in her aspirations."² Besides, the supply of Indian immigrant unskilled labour in excess of requirements leads to unemployment or serious under-employment, and reduces the rates of wages.

¹ Thien Maung : *Immigration Problem of Burma*. 1939.

² A. N. Rao : *Indian Labour in Burma*.

Obviously, one of the reasons for this state of affairs was the chronic overcrowding in certain districts of Southern India, which forced her indigent peoples to migrate and caused them, in Burma at any rate, to work far more contentedly than the Burmese at far lower rates of pay. The Index of 1934 shows that the standard of living of the Burmese labourers was three times that of the Indians. "The Burman was able to maintain a much higher standard of living than is general in any Indian province, while the harder and more monotonous work was left to Indians, who, if they did not attain the same standard, got much better pay than they could find in India."¹ Even in the economic depression of 1929-31, the Indian still found himself better off in Burma than in India, thus adding to the effects of the depression: for many Indians, caught in Burma by the world crisis, and unable to return home even had they wanted to, were also unable to find employment where they were, and in this way considerably aggravated the general malaise of the country. In fact, it would seem that the amount of economic prosperity in Burma at any given moment is a clue to the state of Indian immigration. "The more prosperous the conditions, the greater the volume of immigration and, allowing for the time lag, of emigration."² It would, however, be unwise to conclude that the movement of Indian labour is so self-regulated as to create no problem for the Burmese.

That these problems do exist at the present day, largely as a result of Indian immigration in the past, is unfortunately true, though only the most rabidly nationalistic Burmese would strive to stop immigration altogether. The whole question needs a new approach, since no one can expect that Indian labour, which was a boon in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Burma became a colony of the British Empire, could continue unchanged in its benefits. The position of the Indian *vis-a-vis* the Burmese has changed radically, and for a variety of reasons. Not the least of these is the question of the division of labour.

The trouble seems to be that the Indian, earlier imported to do the heavier and dirtier jobs which the Burmese would not do, is gradually penetrating into other employment, notably clerical and commercial posts in Rangoon; while the Burmese, who

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour (1929).

² James Baxter: *Report on Indian Immigration*. 1941.

earlier had no need to accept work he disliked, and at which he was inept, has now been forced to it by the slump of 1931-32. The fact that he does the job less expertly, and with more trouble to himself than the average Indian coolie; and that he sees the semi-literate Indian clerk filling the post for which he feels himself to be by native gifts adapted, makes things no easier for either side.

There was earlier a natural and instinctive division of labour which grew up side by side with unrestricted immigration of Indians. While they predominated in the heavier forms of unskilled work, the Burmese tended to monopolise the position of skilled artisans. This was not so much a question of racial aptitude as of economic pressure and divergent family traditions. The Indian, for generations, has been forced by the pressure of over-population to earn his living elsewhere than in India, and at tasks which more prosperous and less hard-driven people would not undertake. According to the 1931 census, in Burma the average population per square mile was 63; in Madras and Bengal, from whose districts so many Indians came, the average density varied between 328 and 616. The Burmese has tended to come of a moderately comfortable agricultural family in which it was not necessary to work unduly hard in order to make a living. Partly as a result of the over-population, the younger men in Indian families are accustomed to seek work, in regimented bands, hundreds of miles from home, and there to live a rough and ready life in coolie barracks or suchlike accommodation. The Burmese has a horror of regimented living, and is able to take his family with him wherever he works, or to choose work which will keep him in his own village. Thus he makes a bad subject for a coolie gang on railways, roadways, and other such contracts; work in which the Indian, already torn from his family, is easily drafted into a convenient and mobile force. Once there, he is naturally more docile than the Burmese. This makes it far easier for employers and overseers to manage large gangs of Indian coolies: and the general division of work thus developed seems now, after the passage of many years, to have crystallized into permanent form. To sum up in the words of an employer of great experience: "When the work is intricate the Burmans understand it far better than Indians, and in such work where brawn is more in demand than brain, the Burman falls far short of the Indian. Where Burmans and Indians are

working together, the Burmans take it for granted that the lighter and cleaner work should be done by them. The heavy and dirty or coarse work should as a matter of course be relegated to Indians. . . . The work performance of the Burman labourer is low compared with the average Indian coolie, and any material increase in the proportion of indigenous labour would certainly increase costs.”¹ In fact, the whole economy of many industries is built up on this division ; and any change in the balance between heavy and skilled work would result in a ruinous increase in costs which would seriously upset such highly organised industries as mining and saw-milling.

The second main cause of trouble between Indians and Burmese lies in the penetration of the Indian business man and merchant into the basic structure of the country’s economy, and the resultant alienation of land from the Burmese peasant. The Indian money-lender, for example, has become a menace to rural Burma. The process, under which rural indebtedness accumulates and reduces its victim to the status of a serf, is viciously simple.

No wonder that the increasing grip of Indian money-lenders on rural economy has made many a Burmese peasant loathe the name of Indian.

In spite of these root causes of friction, the trouble between Indians and Burmese did not come to a head until the financial crisis of the 1930s. This crisis, together with the strong nationalist feelings which emerged when Burma was awarded a separate political entity by the Imperial Government, brought about inter-racial conflict which culminated in the serious Indo-Burmese riots of 1938. The Riot Committee, in its report, urged most strongly that the whole question of Indians in Burma be re-examined ; pointing out that the alleged penetration of Indian labour into Burma had by no means been proved, that the status of Indians as British subjects should at all costs be upheld, and that only an impartial enquiry, with later publication of the findings, would reassure both sides. “ We think,” says the Report, “ that both Indians and Burmans need urgent public reassurance—Indians, that their status as British subjects in Burma will be upheld and that the position which the benefits they have conferred on Burma entitle them to will not be lost,

¹ James Baxter : *Report on Indian Immigration*.

and Burmans, that the economic growth and interests of the Burmese races will not be unnecessarily stifled and overlooked."

This enquiry into the riots, and the enquiry into the whole question of Indian immigration which resulted from it, has established certain facts about the present problem which confronts both Indians and Burmese. The whole question of Indian immigration into Burma, and the status of those Indians who have for long periods worked in the country, was brought to a head by two fundamental causes. In the economic field, the collapse of prices during the depression of the 1930s bred a feeling of insecurity, an increase in the indebtedness of the rural population (whose land was being steadily alienated, in many cases to the benefit of an Indian) and the emergence of strong nationalist feelings as soon as Burma was recognized as a separate political entity. The separation from India changed the status of Indians to that of foreigners. Indeed, the amicable relations of the two races (who had in many cases grown up side by side, particularly in Lower Burma and the Rangoon district) had been deteriorating steadily since 1930, and received a fresh impetus after the creation of Burma as a separate political State.

It was stated during the enquiry that the "mental" climate of Burma had increasingly favoured the growth of opposition to the immigrant Indian. There had grown up a widespread but erroneous view that a real danger to Burma exists in increasing Indian immigration. The prejudice had become not only general but popular, nor did it take any account of the fact that, during the time when Burma and India shared governments, there was no hindrance to the movement of Indians into Burma, and also no tendency whatever towards a swamping of the country by immigrants. Burma is still an under-populated and undeveloped country. India has long been seriously over-populated, especially in parts of Madras and Bengal from where immigrants come to Burma. Had emigration to Burma on a larger scale provided a solution of the Indian problem, the larger country would have swamped the smaller many years ago. "It should be much more widely known in Burma that the immigration of Indians overseas has never and can never play any significant part in the solution of India's population problem. The whole of the Indians now settled and employed in Ceylon, the African territories, Malaya and Burma are less

than the average annual increase of population in India, and therefore the fear that Burma may be used as a kind of safety valve for a growing Indian population appears to be without foundation."¹

Secondly, it was clearly revealed that, as is commonly the case in inter-racial strife, the proportion of immigrants or "foreigners" in the capital city had bred exaggerated fears in the Burmese mind about Indian penetration. Rangoon is certainly a predominantly Indian town, and the Indian population (as much as 53 per cent. of the total) here falls into three main categories, each of them unfortunately competing with Burmese labour : the unskilled port workers and stevedores, the semi-educated shop-assistants and clerical employees, and the astute and prospering business man whose hold on the poorer Burmese, both in town and country, is too often a stranglehold. Thus, in Burma's chief city, where racial feeling (as in all considerable cities) is apt to be intense and more hysterical than elsewhere, the results of Indian immigration are all too constantly impinging upon the Burman mind. It is feared that the Indian immigrant will continue his steady infiltration, increasingly expand his commercial interests, and oust the Burmese from those semi-skilled and lower clerical posts which he has long considered to be especially his. It has repeatedly been said that, wherever a vacancy in one of these jobs occurs, "there is always an Indian round the corner waiting to step into it." It is even maintained that Indians act as scouts for their relatives and friends, keeping them posted as to vacancies and working them in as they see the chance. It has certainly been categorically stated by experienced employers that a certain lack of co-operation between Indians and Burmese on office staffs makes it exceedingly difficult to employ the two races jointly.

But I believe that the settlement of problems arising essentially out of economic competition will be possible when both India and Burma attain the status of an independent sovereign state and become free from their political subservience to the policy of British imperialism. The peoples of both countries are increasingly aware of the circumstances which are largely responsible for racial conflicts and socio-economic disequilibrium in Burma. A resolution passed by the All-Burma Labour Conference in 1939 states : "This Conference is convinced that the policy

¹ James Baxter : *Report on Indian Immigration*.

of British imperialism is responsible first for introducing commercialised agricultural economy into Lower Burma by importing Indian labour, which was impoverished in its turn by British economic exploitation in India, to cultivate lands and to work in the new industries of Burma and for helping capitalists to cater to the needs of the Burmese market for credit by first of all making it impossible for it to develop Indian industries and ultimately for creating a growing conflict of interest between Burmese and Indians. Therefore immigration of labour from India has to undermine all the efforts of Indian labour in Burma to improve the economic and social conditions by enabling the capitalist employers and their maistries who continually lower the earnings of workers and by preventing the growth of healthy trade unionism owing to the continuous over-supply of floating casual labour."

All this must, of necessity, alter in the course of our mutual struggle for freedom; and in the atmosphere of independent sovereign states we should be able to readjust Indo-Burmese relations in a manner warranted by our needs for economic, social and cultural interests. The Burmese peoples have a long tradition of racial tolerance and the present anti-Indian prejudice is really the outcome of the influence of an alien rule.

IV

Ceylon is a "precious plantation" colony of the British Empire. Vast forest areas of the uplands were cleared to make room for coffee plantations, but they failed chiefly because of the spread of a fungoid disease of the leaves. Early planters had not learned that coffee bushes need a little shade from trees planted some distance apart. With the failure of these plantations, a tea industry rose phoenix-like from the ashes of the coffee estates. Then came cocoa and rubber. The extensive cultivation of these plantation crops, with an abundant supply of cheap labour, transformed the indigenous agriculture into what Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of the island, once described as "the development of these important permanent agricultural enterprises." While they benefited planters, shareholders, middlemen, transport agents and the world of commerce, agriculture in Ceylon was reduced to that state in which both the quantitative and qualitative production of crops fell too far short of the food requirements of the people. Ceylon

has to pay a heavy food bill. In 1933, for instance, she had to import rice, grains and other foodstuffs to the value of nearly 87 million rupees. The cultivation of rice, the staple food of the people, is neglected : and consequently half of Ceylon's food bill of 110 million rupees in 1935 was paid to purchase rice from the neighbouring countries. Blessed as this island is with suitable conditions for fruit cultivation, its market draws a large supply of fruit from Australia, New Zealand and California. Thus Ceylon provides an outstanding example of the consequences of the domination of imperialism upon the rural economy of a colony, and, in the midst of potential agricultural prosperity, the Sinhalese peasantry remains on the verge of the lowest level of subsistence. It was of the island of Ceylon that Ribeiro, the Portuguese traveller who visited the country in 1640 said: "None need suffer from hunger, for this land is a Paradise owing to the great fertility of its soil."

Ceylon has a heterogeneous population. It is estimated that out of a total population of 6,197,000 in the island, there are 4,155,000 Sinhalese ; 1,543,000 Tamils ; 393,000 Moors ; 41,000 Burghers (descendants of the Dutch colonists) and Eurasians ; 18,000 Malays ; and about 5,000 British (not including the military). The largest group, the Sinhalese, who now appear to be apprehensive of the claims of the Indian communities in Ceylon, immigrated at an early period from India. To-day the Indian communities consist largely of the Tamils from South India. The British, the smallest minority group, occupy the foremost place both in economic and political spheres by virtue of their control over two of the main sources of Ceylon's prosperity, namely, the rubber and tea industries.

Europeans began to set up these plantations more than a century ago. They could not, however, be worked with Sinhalese labour, and consequently the planters have drawn on a large supply from India. "When Europeans began to open up the jungles," writes the Registrar-General of the Government of Ceylon in his Report (1931), "and to plant coffee there and later tea and rubber, local labour was not available on the spot and was unwilling to move to and work on the estates. In the Madras Presidency, however, there was surplus labour. The social habits of the Tamils and other races, in combination with the meagre rainfall, resulted in keeping the population near to and sometimes below the subsistence limit. From about 1825 the Ceylon

planters drew on this labour reservoir and there has been a huge movement of Indian estate labour between Ceylon and India from that time to the present day."

There were in 1931 over 682,000 Indian agriculturists serving on various estates as coolies. Since the passing of the Emigration Act of 1922 by the Government of India and of a Labour Ordinance by the Government of Ceylon in 1923, some of the appalling conditions of labour have been removed. The adoption of a scale of standard minimum wages, the prohibition of the employment of children under ten years and the system of regular payment have undoubtedly improved the situation. But, to quote a report¹ on immigration into Ceylon, "for an indefinite time in the future a large number of Indian labourers will be necessary for work on estates where conditions are unfavourable to the employment of Ceylonese."

Nearly 75 per cent. of the total Indian population in Ceylon are employed upon tea, rubber and cocoanut plantations. The number of Indians, including men, women and children, found on estates in 1929, was about 742,000, but at the end of 1936 the figure was estimated at 659,000.

The bulk of the Indian emigrants is composed of Tamils from South India. The methods and organisation of recruiting closely follow the *Kangany* system which we have described in connection with Malaya; but here it worked for many years without official supervision and the planters secured their requirements independently of each other through *Kanganies* from India.

The *Kangany* system operating in Ceylon has, however, two distinctive features which should be mentioned. First, the principle of recruiting is based mainly on the family system, the *Kangany* originally being the senior member of a family group composed of his personal relatives. Other families from neighbouring villages may assist him in the work. Thus, the head-*Kangany* has the co-operation of a number of smaller groups, each under a chief called *Silara-Kangany*, and all these agents succeed in drawing into their net the dregs of the village population. In the second place, owing to a sharp increase in demand, professional recruiters invaded the labour market with the system of advance known as *Tundu*. It reduced the recruited labourer to the position of the

¹ Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon, by Sir Edward Jackson, 1938.

Kangany's bondman and his debt servitude rendered him liable to tyrannies of all descriptions. Mr. Reid, formerly Controller of Labour, in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour which visited Ceylon in 1930, said: "The Indian labourer is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt." It is the *Kangany* system of recruiting labour that tolerates a form of slavery under other names and guises. Not only did the system give rise to grave abuses, but it seriously interfered with the proper functioning of the *Kangany* recruiting. About a year before the Government of India passed the Immigration Act (1922), the *Tundu* system was therefore declared unlawful, and the Ceylon recruiting organisation was adjusted, as in Malaya, to the policy of assisted emigration. A licensing system has been adopted which normally authorizes the recruitment of twenty labourers, but in actual practice the number may even exceed seventy persons. The numbers of assisted immigrants, recruited chiefly through *Kanganyies*, vary greatly from year to year, as may be seen from the following table:

TABLE VI¹
Showing the influx of assisted immigrants for plantations
since 1922.

Year	Assisted Immigrants		Total
	<i>Ex-labourers returning</i>	<i>New recruits</i>	
1922	37,493	40,143	77,636
1923	46,272	43,587	89,859
1924	62,474	91,515	153,989
1925	57,570	68,015	125,585
1926	51,330	50,416	101,746
1927	66,055	93,343	159,398
1928	62,139	71,573	133,712
1929	59,404	45,691	105,095
1930	56,639	34,783	91,422
1931	45,389	22,948	68,337
1932	37,837	13,032	50,869
1933	26,926	5,972	32,898
1934	69,310	71,297	140,607
1935	36,997	6,021	43,018
1936	35,832	4,971	40,803

¹ Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon, 1938.

These figures, which we quote at length, illustrate that aspect of plantation economy which flourishes under the circumstances of sheer redundancy of the available labour force.

In Ceylon, the normal proportion of males to females is maintained, and on certain estates the labourers are encouraged to supplement their incomes by working garden allotments. Women and children over ten years of age, we should note, "take a large and very essential part in estate work." But the legislation affecting the Indian labourers contains no provision for preventing the separation of families in estates. The Agent of the Government of India records in his Report (1932) a number of cases in which the husband was discharged and the wife detained on the estate ostensibly for the reason that she was unwilling to accompany him, but in reality under the undue influence of the *Kangany* or some other official on the estate.

As regards the emigrants who seek a livelihood in the island in other capacities than as plantation labourers, their number has in recent years been considerably reduced. It is estimated that the non-estate Indian population at the end of 1936 was between 190,000 and 230,000. The position of the non-estate immigrant labourer is that he "is not recruited, or at least is not supposed to be. He comes, supposedly, of his own initiative and at his own charge. His numbers are subject to no control whatever. He comes, as a rule, from a different part of India, from the home of the estate workers, or from different surroundings in the same part, and he belongs to different castes. He engages himself in a very great variety of occupations. He holds no special place under the law of Ceylon and shares only in the general care of the Government for workers in the island, irrespective of race. No legally established organisation exists to aid either his coming or his return."¹

In addition to these two classes of emigrants, namely, estate and non-estate workers, from India, there are an increasing number of Indian traders who have secured for themselves a strong position in the commercial life of Ceylon. The trading class, the majority of whom belong to the chettiar community from South India, flourish as moneylenders and merchants. The Memons and Boras from the western part of India virtually enjoy the monopoly of the import trade; but there are over 750 registered firms in Ceylon, belonging to the chettiars alone,

¹ Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon, 1938.

which invest an aggregate capital of over 7½ million sterling in banking and commerce. Some of them have amassed a fortune, and in recent years the pressure of economic competition and the growth of what may be described as "the aristocracy of money-lenders" have given rise to the inevitable discord between social elements. And it is the persistence of this disharmony in the economic relationships that is largely responsible for the anti-Indian feeling in Ceylon.

But Ceylon is one of India's closest neighbours, and any damage to our historic cultural relations with the island must be a serious concern to both the countries. It must also be realised that, while 14 per cent. of the total population in Ceylon are Indians born there, over 31 per cent. are of Indian extraction.

Under the constitution initiated by the Donoughmore Commission, Ceylon enjoyed universal adult suffrage. But, as far as the Indians in Ceylon are concerned, practically 75 per cent. were debarred from the franchise. In the first place, the electoral rules required certain qualifications which the estate labourers, who form the bulk of the Indian population, do not possess. Secondly, on account of the disorganisation and the lack of leadership among the Indians themselves, it has not been possible to awaken their interest in the ballot box as a means of redressing their grievances. Thirdly, deliberate attempts have been made to place obstacles in order to exclude them from the voters' list. The Agent of the Government of India in his Report (1931) says: "The number of Indians registered for the franchise would have been higher had not Indian labourers on some estates been intimidated against applying for registration by the circulation among them of pamphlets inspired by interested persons." The number of Indian voters for 1940 showed a marked decrease as compared to their number in 1939.

In conformity with the increasing tendency to bar Indians from holding responsible official positions, there has been a steady decrease in their number in the Ceylon Civil Service since 1931. The discrimination against Indians domiciled in Ceylon has not, however, reached an acute stage, but the policy of preferential treatment for Ceylonese in the spheres of official employment is likely to take a definite form in future.

At the request of the Government of Ceylon, an informal Conference was held in November, 1940, to discuss the questions

of common interest to both Ceylon and India. The status of Indians now domiciled in Ceylon, the problem of Indian franchise, the future of immigration, the conditions of service of daily paid Indian labourers and trade relations between the two countries—all these items were in the agenda of the Conference. But the main trend of the proposals made by the Ceylon Delegation was aimed at a substantial reduction in the number of Indians now resident in Ceylon. Since no agreement could be reached on the principles governing the status of the domiciled Indian community, the Conference broke down without any settlement of other outstanding questions.

Meanwhile the division of authority introduced by the committee system (c.f. the practice of the London County Council) under which the State Council was divided into seven Executive Committees led to unsatisfactory relations between the Sinhalese majority and the minorities and prevented collective responsibility. In 1944 Ceylon was therefore offered a new Constitution on the British model of a Cabinet system, but the plan alarmed the minorities although their interests were safeguarded by a number of constitutional devices. The All-Ceylon Tamil Congress demanded that the plan which places the Sinhalese majority in a preponderant position should be so modified as to ensure impartiality in matters affecting the political and economic status of the minorities. It is now for the Sinhalese to prove that they are free from communal bias and have the capacity to satisfy the aspirations of a plural society.

V

In the Pacific region, Indian immigrants have played a conspicuous part in the development of the economic resources of the *Fiji Islands*. In consequence of the shortage of cotton after the American Civil War, a group of British settlers went to Fiji with a view to exploring the possibilities of cotton cultivation in these islands, and they acquired large areas of land from the native chiefs. The territory was drawn into the Imperial orbit in 1874. At the initial stage the supply of labour for European plantations was drawn from the Fijians and Polynesians; but they were not efficient in the cultivation of sugar cane, cotton and coffee. Following the example of Natal, the Colonial Government induced

the Government of India to encourage the immigration of indentured labour and the influx from India began in 1879. Under the scheme accepted by the Government of India, recruits from India were to be engaged directly by the Government of Fiji and allotted to planters under official supervision. The Government of Fiji paid all costs and recouped itself of two-thirds of the expenditure from employers. One-third was regarded as a grant-in-aid. Since 1880 the total number of Indian labourers who have been induced to enter Fiji under the indenture system exceeds 65,000. The greatest numbers were brought in during the first decade of the twentieth century, the average for each of these years is estimated at 2,684 at the planters' expense and only 250 on the initiative of the labourers themselves. By this time some of the ugly features of the indentured labour were coming to be known, and although the methods of recruitment and the conditions of labour were honeycombed with official regulations, the pernicious nature of the system remained unaltered. We have already seen¹ to what degrading state of serfdom Indian "coolies" were reduced in Fiji under the system which was discontinued in 1917 and finally abolished in the beginning of 1920. Here we shall refer to the status of a large permanent Indian population, numbering about 44 per cent. of the population of the whole of the Fijian group.

Since the cessation of the indenture system, the Government of Fiji have encouraged repatriation to India, but Indians, uprooted from their own home environment and having spent the best part of their lives in Fiji, have rather been inclined to accept the colony as their permanent home. The root cause of the policy of repatriation may be traced to labour disputes over better wages, which the Colonial Sugar Refining Company—the largest employer of labour in the islands—refused to grant to its employees. Ever since the strikes of 1920 and 1921, which were led by Indians, the European community has been supporting the policy of repatriation, and its agents are largely responsible for sowing the seeds of discord between Indians and Fijians. The demand for repatriation was, however, not very keen, and some of the labourers settled in the colony either as agriculturists or as petty traders. Others who came to carry on business found a wide scope for developing the economic life of the colony, in which they came to occupy an

¹ See Chapter III, p. 59.

important place. These islands were in the past sparsely populated and agriculture was still undeveloped; but through the industry and skill of the hard-working Indian smallholders, Fijian agriculture has benefited greatly. Several varieties of suitable crops from India have been introduced, and the technique of farming adopted by the Indian settlers has had educative value to the Fijians. From the land leased to the Indians, at the rate of five or ten shillings per acre, he is often able to produce crops to the value of £10 or £20 per acre. The demonstration of such successful farming cannot but encourage the indigenous population, and may well make a substantial contribution to the future agricultural development of the Pacific region. Over 90 per cent. of sugar output of the colony, which reached the record figure of 140,000 ton (valued at £1,330,000) in 1936, is produced by Indians.

They grow the cane on a contract system and provide, in addition, most of the labour required at the mills. In order to ensure the cheap cane-production in Fiji, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company adopted the policy of settling Indians with their families in sugar farms owned by the Company.

Indians are not, however, allowed to acquire farms, and consequently most of them are tenants either of Fijian landowners or of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Although the great bulk of the land belongs to Fijian landowners, the actual system of leasing and assessment of rent is controlled by the Government. In order to obviate the possible difficulties in regard to renewals of leases, they issued an Ordinance¹ in 1916 which offered greater security of tenure, especially to plantation owners. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company alone controls a vast area of agricultural land, which is partly cultivated under its own management and partly leased out to tenants. There are over 15,000 Indian cultivators who deal directly with their Fijian land proprietors, and it must be said to the credit of the Indian settlers that they have successfully adapted themselves to the conditions in the colony. Both economic and social relations between the Indians and Fijians are cordial. If in recent years there has appeared a note of discord between them in matters relating to the renewal of leases, it is chiefly due to the influence of the Government and of the European community over the Fijian land proprietors, in

¹ The Native Lands (leases) Ordinance.

persuading them that the growth of independent Indian peasantry and of Indian population in Fiji is prejudicial to their interests.

In 1939 the Government of Fiji drafted the Native Land Trust Bill to secure to them power to administer all native land in the Colony on trust through the agency of a Board. The Bill was passed in 1940 but no provision was made for Indian representation on the Native Land Trust Board. Indians are, however, allowed to be appointed in Advisory Local Committees formed by the Board. The fate of existing occupancies, the payment of compensation to an outgoing lessee, and the availability of suitable land for lease to meet the future requirements of the Indian community due to increase in population—all these questions continue to agitate the domiciled Indians in the Colony.

Since the creation of the Native Land Trust Board, non-Fijian persons wishing to acquire land in Fiji must either (a) buy or lease from the owners (mostly Europeans) the alienated, or freehold, land ; or (b) lease any available native land from the Trust Board.

Nearly 71 per cent. of the total Indian population were born in Fiji, but the increase of the Indian population is not, however, welcomed by the Administration, whose policy was not to encourage permanent colonisation, but only to obtain a supply of cheap and plentiful unskilled Indian labour now under a system of free contract. The essential part played by Indian immigrants in the economy of the colony was fully realised by the Government of Fiji only when a shortage of labour threatened the plantations after the indenture system had been abolished. They sent a deputation to India in 1920 with a view to ascertaining the conditions under which the resumption of a regular supply of labour could be assured. The Committee of the Indian Legislative Council stipulated, in the main, one condition, namely, full equality of citizenship to Indians. It was pointed out that in the event of adopting Communal franchise, Indians should be given the right to elect representatives equal to the number of Europeans. The Colonial Committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Hope Simpson endorsed the justice of the demand and observed: "The importance of the Indian community is not adequately represented by the number of seats which it is proposed to allot to them and that no reason which does not accord to the Indian community on a communal basis representation in the Legislative

Council at least numerically equal to that already accorded to the non-official European community can be regarded as consistent with the principle of equality of status." The Colonial Office would not, however, agree to a proposal "consistent with the principle of equality of status," and offered only three out of twelve non-official seats in the Fiji Legislative Council.

Thus, in 1929, Mr. Amery, then Secretary of State for Colonies, followed the example of Kenya and insisted upon the introduction of a racial franchise in amending the Fiji constitution. It provided three seats representing over 75,000 Indians and six representing about 6,000 Europeans. Not merely on the ground that such a method of representation was unjust, but that a grave risk was inherent in the communal franchise, which tended to emphasise sectional interests, the Indian members raised a voice of protest in the first session of the Council. It was all in vain, and they withdrew from the Council. However, in 1932, a section of the Indian political parties in Fiji agreed to co-operate with the Government in the hope that the impending constitutional changes in India might influence the Colonial Office to do justice to the Indians domiciled in these islands.

About a year after the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, the constitution of the colony was amended by Letters Patent. The changes in the structure of the government represented a compromise between the nominative and elective principles. The Legislative Council now consists of the Governor and not more than sixteen nominated members and fifteen non-official members. There are five Indian members of whom three are elected and two nominated. But Indians constitute so large a community that their demand for an adequate voice in the administration of the country is still to be satisfactorily met.

VI

British Guiana came under British rule in 1814. Before the abolition of slavery the sugar estates had abundant supplies of labour and were able to meet the heavy European demand for sugar. When slave labour was no longer available, a serious problem arose for the planters, for the liberated negroes refused to enlist as labourers. Efforts were then made to recruit Portuguese from Madeira and Maltese from Malta; but they proved to be

unsatisfactory. Finally, the success of Indian labour in Mauritius inspired the planters of British Guiana to turn to India; and in 1838 the first batch of 406 Indians were brought in as indentured labourers for the estate of John Gladstone, father of the great Liberal statesman.

But the planters were not accustomed to deal with free labour, and consequently it became necessary to hold an inquiry into the treatment of Indians in the colony only a year after their arrival. For a time Indian immigration was suspended, but in 1853 the indenture system was legalised, and it continued to supply contract labour until its abolition in 1917. Within this period a total of no fewer than 240,000 men, women and children were brought to the plantations of British Guiana. It is estimated that out of British Guiana's total population of over 313,000, there are now about 132,000 Indians; that is, nearly 42 per cent. of the population are composed of the Indian colonists and immigrants. In other words, they are the largest single element in the population of the Colony.

The end of the system of recruiting indentured labour from India, in 1917, "was a blow to the colony," and a deputation came to England in order to "lay before His Majesty's Government a representation of the needs of the colony, both for the maintenance of the present industries, and for their extension, and to show the advantages which the colony offers to immigrants from other countries."

The Colonial Office advised the deputation to proceed to India in order to ascertain whether a scheme for the colonisation of British Guiana, by means of assisted emigration from India, would meet with the approval of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Five delegates of the Colonial Government laid their scheme before a Committee, appointed by the Assembly, under the chairmanship of the late Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee. This conceded to Indian immigrants equal rights with other classes of British subjects in British Guiana, and offered the following terms:

- (1) A free passage to British Guiana for the colonist, his wife and children.
- (2) On arrival, employment with a registered employer at the current rate of wages. Free housing for three years, free medical assistance for the same period, free milk for

children under 5 years for the whole period of employment, and free rations for limited period for wives during pregnancy, were the advantages to be included in the terms of employment.

- (3) A free return passage to India after seven years' residence for adult colonists and their dependents; passages to India after five years' residence on payment of one-quarter of the cost of transit and after three years' residence on payment of one-half of the cost.
- (4) A special reward grant of prepared land—drained and suitable for cultivation—of 5 acres to each head of a family after three years' continuous agricultural work with a registered employer. The only cost to the settler of this land would consist of five annual payments of 4s. 2d. per acre. At the end of eight years (i.e. three years' service, followed by five years' occupation of the land) the settler had the choice of (a) accepting absolute ownership of the land, or (b) abandoning the land and accepting free passage to India for himself and family.

Subsequently the scheme was modified by the Governor of the colony, and the condition of three years' service was no longer made obligatory, and, although the question of land settlement was given much more liberal consideration, it was made apparent that the Government were not prepared to encourage a large colonisation scheme in the colony. Meanwhile, the Committee of the Indian Legislative Assembly advised the appointment of a deputation of three persons to investigate the conditions of life and labour in British Guiana, and to examine the suitability of the scheme proposed by the Colonial Government.

The Indian Deputation consisted of Mr. G. F. Keatinge, C.I.E., I.C.S., Director of Agriculture, Bombay; Dewan Bahadur Kesava Pillai, Deputy President, Madras Legislative Council, and Mr. V. N. Tivary, M.A., a member of the Servants of India Society, Allahabad. Their reports contain much valuable information in regard to the circumstances of the Indian community in the colony, and emphasise the potentialities of British Guiana for Indian settlers.

But the colony is, they observe, to all intents and purposes, an undeveloped country, and the conditions on which the success of

agricultural production depends are extremely limited. In order to make suitable land for settlement available, it is essential that the vast undeveloped areas in the North-western districts should be set up to render every possible assistance to the settlers in overcoming their initial difficulties. Mr. Keatinge suggested that the task of reclamation might advantageously be undertaken by a Land Company, to which the Colonial Government would make a grant of, say, 50,000 acres, on condition that 5,000 Indian families would eventually be settled as small-holders.

The main conclusion of the Indian Deputation was that the provision of suitable land for prospective settlers and existing immigrants, and the improvement in the domestic water supply and sanitation in the areas of settlement, should be made a condition precedent to the acceptance of any scheme proposed by the Colonial Government.

Here we may cite an instance of handicapping the Indian settlers in the pursuit of their peaceful occupation. At Mahaica Creek on the east coast of Demerara, Indians purchased land and through their hard labour it became one of the principal rice-producing areas of British Guiana. Since 1934 floods have been of annual occurrence in these tracts and now a considerable part of the area is out of cultivation. A Report of the British Guiana East India Association states that "the contention of the local population is that the neighbouring conservancy is nowadays maintained at a higher level than formerly to conserve water for the recently introduced system of 'flood fallowing' on the sugar estates of the East Coast. When there is heavy rain, the margin of safety is not sufficient ; and, to save their dams, the conservancy let water out through cuts into the Mahaica river basin, this abnormal discharge of water being more than the river can carry away. It is further contended that this water, instead of being released into special channels, is released over the countryside. If the water were not thus allowed to overflow, it would flood the Sugar Estates and the farmers of Mahaica Creek complain that these large Estates benefit at their expense."

But it must be remembered that the Governments of British colonies and the European planters look upon immigration as a means to an end, and in so far as Indians are concerned, they all adopt a policy of exclusion rather than offering them opportunities for immigration and settlement, even where the climate and

agricultural conditions are favourable to Indian colonisation. No better example of this can be furnished than in the Government's opposition to the proposals for attracting Indians to British Guiana. Mr. Keatinge wrote in his report:

"I am convinced that the normal conditions of the Colony offer to Indians of many classes and occupations opportunities for a higher standard of living than India is able to offer them and opportunities to win through to competence and wealth such as they have not got in their own home. If Indian immigration is stopped altogether, the effect on the labour supply of the Colony will be very serious for a time and it is probable that many sugar estates will have to close down. If Indian immigration is again permitted and adequate development can be secured of such a nature as to attract the right class of settlers, Indians will in a short time predominate in the Colony and a prosperous Indian colony will be created . . . not only in British Guiana but in surrounding countries . . ."

But it was precisely this development which the Colonial Government sought to avoid. In view of the hesitancy of the Administration of British Guiana in coming to a definite agreement in regard to a scheme for colonisation by means of asswaiss emigration from India, the Government of India deputed Kuntre Sir Maharaj Singh to proceed to British Guiana and report on the scheme proposed by the Governor of the colony.

During his visit towards the end of 1925, Sir Maharaj Singh found that the Indian immigrants had proved themselves to be successful colonists and that they welcomed a steady influx of further immigrants, although they were opposed to any scheme that would bind immigrants to a period of service under a registered employer. His own conclusion was in full agreement with the previous reports by Mr. G. F. Keatinge and his colleagues in regard to the great potentialities of British Guiana for Indian colonisation; but he suggested that the first recruitment of immigrant land settlers should be restricted to 500 families (i.e. about 1,500 persons) as an experiment. The cost of the experiment should be borne both by the colonisation and immigration fund.

With a view to offering suitable conditions for the development of small-holdings, it was proposed that the Land Settlement

Commission and Colonisation Board of British Guiana should allot 5 acres of land per family. Since the cultivation of this allotment would neither occupy the whole time of the settler nor would it be sufficient to support his family, he could well be employed on sugar estates or public works in his spare time. Sir Maharaj Singh laid stress upon the selection of immigrants and recommended that they should be recruited chiefly from the farming communities in the rice and sugar cane growing areas of India, and that the Recruiting Officer of the colony should be assisted in making his selection by an officer of the Provincial Government in India within whose jurisdiction the port of embarkation was situated.

While a scheme of selected emigration to British Guiana received a general approval from all parties concerned, it was not finally adopted by the Colonial Government, who felt that the conditions relating to the supply of labour were too onerous from the point of view of employers, and that the financial resources of the colony would not allow the expenditure involved in bringing into operation this scheme of Indian colonisation. On drawing up a detailed estimate of the scheme, it was found that the cost of settling even the initial 500 families would be about £127,000.

Meanwhile, the Report of the British Guiana Commission was submitted to Parliament in 1927. It supported the opinion that the colony was exceptionally suitable for Indian colonisation, but advised the Government not to embark upon any proposed scheme for the purpose before making organised efforts to recruit immigrants from the adjoining territories, namely, Barbados and Jamaica. The idea of encouraging emigration from India was abandoned and the prospect of colonisation of suitable areas by the immigrants from the West Indies was investigated. The Hon. J. Mullin, Commissioner of Lands and Mines, and Captain F. Burnett, Deputy Director of Agriculture, carried out an agricultural survey in 1933, and suggested ways and means of "judicious introduction of skilled cultivators from the West Indian Islands, preferably for cane-farming, but also for cultivation of general crops."

So much for the history of Indian colonisation. In another chapter we shall revert to the scope of such a project in developing the vast area of agricultural land still vested in the Government.

Here we note that in matters both of municipal and political franchise, no discrimination is made against Indians in British Guiana; but what really stands in the way of their exercising their rights is the illiteracy of a large proportion of eligible voters who are unable to place their names upon the Register. It should be noted that, under the new constitution promulgated on the 18th July, 1928, the Governor's Court was modified into a Legislative Council, comprising 10 officials, 14 elected and 5 nominated members, with the Governor as President. The first General Election under this new constitution was held in 1930.

Indians hold three seats out of fourteen elected members and one Indian member of the Legislative Council has been nominated as a member of the Governor's Executive Council. The 1943 amendment to the constitution reduced the number of nominated and official members from 15 to 10, and thus gave the elected members a majority of 4 over the nominated and official members combined. Large sections of the working class were not enfranchised and the Franchise Commission in 1944 recommended a substantial reduction in the qualifications necessary for the franchise.

The relations of the Indian community with the other communities are happy and it is believed that the East Indian Association, a body claiming to represent Indians, has contributed much to reduce possible causes of friction between the Indian and the other elements of the population.

VII

To Britain belong *Jamaica*, *Trinidad* and certain smaller groups of islands in the Windward and Leeward Isles, and these colonies, known as the British West Indies, owe a great debt to India. It is now 300 years since these colonies were first settled by Europeans, and a century since the Emancipation. Here again the era of development began, after the abolition of slavery, with the importation of indentured labourers from India. Not only did the shortage of labour following the Emancipation embarrass the European planters in the West Indies, but the extension of beet sugar cultivation in Europe necessitated the employment of labourers skilled in cane-farming. Even if negro labour was available from Cuba, the importation from India served the pur-

pose of keeping down the wages; and when, in the eighties, the trade depression descended upon the planters, the Indian Emigration Act of 1883 facilitated the supply of cheap labour, and the planters offered lands instead of return passage should an indentured labourer desire to settle as a peasant.

At the time when the indenture system of recruitment was declared illegal, Trinidad had already over 127,000 (that is, nearly 32 per cent. of the total population) and Jamaica nearly 20,000 Indian settlers, but a large number of Indian immigrants returned to India in 1917-18, because they found no facilities for land settlement or independent livelihood. The policy of land settlement leading to the emergence of a substantial peasantry, from the negro as well as the Indian communities, is, of course, contrary to the interests of the planters. They realised that the extension of peasant agriculture would undoubtedly result in the shrinkage of abundant and cheap labour supply. What suited them best was the presence of a large reservoir of labourers entirely dependent upon being employed on plantations, and consequently subject to their control in regard to wages and conditions of labour. Already in Jamaica the ratio of independent cultivators to plantation labourers had reached even proportions.¹ Similar trends towards the development of peasant agriculture in other parts of the West Indies are therefore persistently resisted by the planters : and it is in their powerful opposition that we have an explanation of the discouraging results from the various land settlement schemes in British Guiana; and it is the inability of the Colonial Office, notwithstanding its avowed good intentions, to overrule the dominance of vested interests that is largely responsible for the abject standard of living not only of the indigenous population, but also of the immigrant communities in the Colonial Empire.

Alarmed at the social consequences of making the West Indies a planter's paradise, as long ago as 1897 a Royal Commission² stated in clear terms that "no reform affords so good a prospect for the permanent welfare in the future of the West Indies as the

¹ The available figures are as follows :

	<i>Independent cultivators</i>	<i>Plantation labourers</i>
Jamaica	129,312	111,166
British Guiana	22,898	51,705
Trinidad	8,762	38,822

² Under the chairmanship of Sir. H. Norman.

settlement of the labouring population on the land as small peasant proprietors, and in many places this is the only means by which the population can in future be supported." After the lapse of thirty-three years, the Sugar Commission (1930) expressed its strong concurrence with the above view ; but the principal opponents of a change in the structure of plantation economy were the planters, who, in league with merchants and industrialists, defeated the adoption of such progressive measures as would destroy the economic foundations of slavery by the extension of peasant agriculture in the West Indies.

Public opinion in England has recently been stirred by the rebellion of the working class in Jamaica and Trinidad. While Labour in this paradise of the European planters is becoming more articulate, the political organisation so greatly influenced by the vested interests remains unprogressive. In the very year when the British West Indies celebrated the centenary of Emancipation, the plantation labourers declared that the wages and conditions of labour were nothing but a substitution for the system of slavery. "The masses are poor or very poor," writes¹ Professor W. M. Macmillan, "with a standard of living reminding one of the native and coloured communities of the Union of South Africa. . . . A social and economic study of the West Indies is therefore necessarily a study of poverty." It is this warning from the West Indian colonies that has led to the appointment of a Royal Commission under the Chairmanship of the late Lord Moyne.

To return to the position of the Indians in the West Indies. Indians in Jamaica number about 18,000, only 1.5 per cent. of the total population. A large number of dairies are owned by Indians and there are also Indian artisans who fulfil an important function in the economic life of the colony.

But the position of the Indians in Jamaica is summed up by Mr. J. D. Tyson, the officer sent on deputation by the Government of India in connection with the West Indies Royal Commission, in the following words. He writes: "The Indians in Jamaica struck me as the most backward, depressed and helpless of the Indian communities I saw in the West Indies. They have no real organisation and little solidarity and cohesion except in so far as the differentiation against them forces them to stand together as a

¹ *Warning from the West Indies.*

race apart. I see no prospect for them of more sympathetic treatment from the Legislature and their main hope seems to lie in the restoration of the post of Protector for which they have very rightly pressed. The lack of education and the absence of natural leaders of standing and position are great handicaps in the way of the community." He also remarks that "the complaint was absolutely universal, among the Indians whom I met, of race prejudice against them in the Legislature, in the Local Boards (which administer Poor Relief) and in the labour market wherever the 'Jamaican' controlled either the engaging of labour or the distribution of work."

The estimated Indian population of Trinidad is computed at 150,000 or about 33.7 per cent. of the population of the Colony. On the 30th May, 1945, Indians celebrated the centenary of their settlement in Trinidad. It may be assumed, as there has been no assisted immigration since 1931, that the proportion of "Colonial-born" is now considerably higher than the figure (about 83 per cent.) of 1931. While the majority live in poverty, a section of the Indian community has had success in commercial and professional spheres. Indian labour is mainly agricultural, only a few sugar factories employ Indians on the mechanical section. There is discrimination against them in the matter of entrance into and training in the mechanical industries of the Colony.

Under the Immigration (Restriction) Ordinance of 1936, an Indian entering the Colony from India is required to deposit a sum of \$500, but an immigrant from the West Indies or British Guiana has to deposit \$100 only. The sum required from an immigrant from the continent of America, Europe and elsewhere is \$250. Thus, there is discrimination against a race which supplies one-third of the population of the Colony and Indians rightly feel that they are placed in a position inferior to that of a non-British subject.

In conformity with the general principle of constitutional changes in the West Indies, the Indian community is, however, without any racial discrimination, given political franchise. Of the seven elected members of the Legislative Council, three are Indians. There is no Indian in the Executive Council. The principle of electing members of the Legislative Council was introduced in 1926, but the limitations on franchise are of such a char-

acter that the system became characteristic more of oligarchy than democracy. The high property qualifications of candidates as well as of voters, and the compulsory system of registration, render political franchise a privilege rather of the propertied and politically conscious classes. In Trinidad, for example, candidates must own real estate of £2,500 in value or derive £200 per annum therefrom; or they must have an income of over £400 from any source. As regards the voter's qualification, he must have an income of £62 10 0 per annum whereas his average earnings do not exceed £40! The election of members of the Council is held every five years.

Recently the Imperial Government have introduced a new Constitution for Jamaica, which is to be given a five-year trial. The Constitution establishes a two-chamber legislature consisting of a House of Representatives of 24 elected members and a Legislative Council consisting of 3 official and 12 unofficial members. The Executive Council is composed of 10 members—5 elected by the House of Representatives and 5 nominated by the Governor from the members of the Legislative Council. As regards Trinidad, the amendment to the Constitution makes provision for 9 elected members and reduces the number of official members to 3. The Report of the Franchise Commission (1944) recommended the extension of suffrage and a very substantial reduction in the income qualification required for the exercise of the franchise.

Notwithstanding depressing economic conditions, the Indians have earned for themselves a permanent place in the West Indies. They retain, to a certain extent, their languages, their customs and their religions; but the contact with other races has considerably modified their outlook and the children born in the colony have successfully adapted themselves to their environment.

Chapter Five

LIFE AND LABOUR OF THE INDIANS IN THE EMPIRE OVERSEAS

I

So far we have dealt with the history and development of Indian emigration to the Empire overseas and have indicated some of the disabilities, political, social and economic, from which Indians suffer. We must now enquire to what extent these disabilities affect the life and labour of the Indian communities.

The emigrant Indians are engaged in four main occupations and they may be classified as follows: (a) wage-earners in the fields, factories and mines; (b) traders; (c) professional workers; and (d) peasant proprietors. The majority belong to the first category and the conditions of their labour constitute a problem of some magnitude. We may, therefore, briefly discuss the general trend of labour policy in the Dominions and Colonies; and if we make a careful analysis of the various legislative measures enacted in pursuance of that policy, we shall discover that they are the necessary product of certain well-recognised features of modern capitalism.

The economic life of the Western powers is dependent upon "black man's crops," and upon coloured labour. Raw cotton, jute, hemp, sisal, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, oilseeds, rubber, drug plants, dye-stuffs—all these furnish the basic materials for industry, and cannot be cultivated economically with the employment of white labour. It was for the assured supply of these tropical and sub-tropical products that the Western nations scrambled for "possessions" in the coloured man's country. Whether in plantations or in mines, a supply of cheap labour is an essential prerequisite for all capitalistic enterprises; for without this the vast territories which are brought into the possession of the white settlers are useless.

The abolition of slavery led to indentured labour from overseas—the system which failed to achieve (to quote Leonard Barnes's phrase) the "positive" side of the Emancipation Act of 1833. In

South Africa, for example, the European settlers saw the risk of creating a permanent wage-earning class and turned to contract labour from the overpopulated countries. As soon as the Boer War was over, the South African mining industry demanded and obtained indentured Chinese labour. It was then hoped that there would be no opposition to the system from the Chinese Government; but even this source of labour supply was not free from a vigilant public opinion in that country. Thus, with the growing difficulties in connection with indentured labour, the European planters and industrialists turned to various methods of recruiting native labour. The problem was not, however, an easy one, and since compulsory measures could not be adopted indefinitely, the pressure used must be the pressure of circumstance rather than of physical force. "The weapon of taxation" is found effective. A heavy hut-tax of twelve shillings a year was levied upon the Africans in the native villages and thus to compel them to leave their homes and earn this amount as wage-earners. Figures quoted in Buell's survey of *The Native Problem in Africa* show that able-bodied males would be required to work for wages two months of each year in order to secure the tax money. The policy is, in short, to drive the natives by taxation and other devices to work for Europeans. The way to get cheap labour is, in the first place, to create a landless agricultural proletariat. It was easy to do this in Africa, and consequently the landless natives have become squatters on land now possessed by white settlers. The relative allocation of land, for example, between the natives and the Europeans in the Union of South Africa is as follows:

TABLE VII.¹*Distribution of Land in the Union of South Africa*

<i>Provinces</i>				<i>*Morgen per head</i>	
				<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>
The Cape	..	..	..	108.1	4.3
Natal	..	..	..	47.2	2.6
Transvaal	..	..	..	45.0	3.7
Orange Free State	..	..	..	73.6	0.3

* 1 Morgen—2.19 acres.

While the policy of gaining ownership of the land in South Africa was evolved gradually by force of circumstance, in Kenya

¹ S. Vere Pearson, *The Growth and Distribution of Population*, 1935.

it was planned. There the total area of land reserved to about 3,500,000 natives is less than a quarter of the area of the Colony, but their trustees, the 28,000 Europeans, practically own the rest of the remaining three-quarters. A historian of the Colony¹ tells us that a prominent and influential European settler received a grant of 100,000 acres for a "merely nominal payment" and, as shown in official papers, had sold over 82,000 acres by 1926 for more than £150,000 profit.

Thus the acquisition of land in the Colonial Empire, the growth of landlordism, taxation, the system of compulsory registration and various other factors result in bringing indirect pressure upon the natives to work on European plantations. The process is largely responsible for the disintegration of the tribal organisation, the decline of agricultural economy and the disturbance of social life of the native population. This is of course denied by the Europeans. At any rate, uncontrolled migration of native labour, according to the frank admission of Mr. W. Ormsby-Gore (now Lord Harlech) "has been most harmful to the village and tribal life and a continuance of present conditions would have a very serious effect."²

The Europeans in Kenya, however, believe that a form of compulsory labour would be a suitable corrective to the natives' indolent habits. "A good sound system of compulsory labour," writes Major E. S. Morgan, "would do more to raise the nigger in five years than all the millions that have been sunk in missionary efforts for the last fifty. . . . Let the native be compelled to work so many months in the year and call it compulsory education, as we call our weekly bonnet parades Church. Under such a title, surely the most delicate British conscience may be at rest." Even the Anglican bishops concerned with the conversion of the heathen upheld the policy that the native must be forced to work.

One of the motives behind the agitation for self-government in East Africa was to secure freedom of action independent of any interference from the Colonial Office or from the British public. This freedom of action facilitates the exploitation of native labour, for, since the supply of indentured labour ceased, it has been the policy of the propertied class to shift the burden of physical toil

¹ W. McGregor Ross, *Kenya from Within: A Short Political History*, 1927.

² Hansard, July 1st, 1936.

³ Major E. S. Morgan, *From Cape to Cairo*.

on the native races. The quality of native labour must be kept low, in order to reserve all skilled occupations to the white settlers; and the unskilled labour required in plantations, mines, factories and workshops must remain in native hands. While the original foundations of the sugar industry in Natal, for example, were laid upon indentured coolie labour from India, all new development since the cessation of the indentured system has depended upon the supply of native labour. But the natives must not be allowed to encroach upon the close preserves of the white skilled labour. That is why in formulating post-war plans for economic development of the Colonies, the proposals for training non-Europeans receive scant attention. No country can successfully reorganise its social and economic life if a large proportion of indigenous labour is deliberately kept under the category of unskilled labour.

In South Africa the "civilised labour policy," as it is called, of the Union Government lays down as its goal the total replacement of Indian and native labour by Europeans in all suitable official and municipal employment. A circular issued by the Prime Minister on 31st October, 1924, lays down what is really meant by civilised labour. It says:

"The Prime Minister desires it to be understood by all Departments of State that it has been decided as a matter of definite policy that, wherever practicable, civilized labour shall be substituted in all employment by the Government for that which may be classified as uncivilized. Civilized labour is to be considered as the labour rendered by persons, whose standard of living conforms to the standards generally recognised as tolerable from the usual European stand-point. Uncivilized labour is to be regarded as the labour rendered by persons whose aim is restricted to the bare requirements of the necessities of life as understood among barbarous and undeveloped peoples."

Such a policy is fatal to industrial and agricultural development and widens the gulf that separates the white settlers and natives. And this labour policy has had its counterpart in the segregation of the coloured population from the Europeans. As the late Mr. G. L. Steer puts it: "The policy of segregation in Africa has always connoted a total reduction of native rights—in civil

status, in land ownership, in powers of industrial combination or political expression, and in wages."¹

About the time of the Round Table Conferences on Indian immigrant communities, the Union Government, under General Hertzog, initiated further measures for applying a rigid system of segregation of the natives. Through fear of competition, the Colour Bar Act of 1926 prohibited the Africans from being employed in skilled and semi-skilled work in the mines, on the railways and in other public services. Rules and Regulations, such as the refusal to issue motor licences to natives, were enacted ; and Hertzog and his party were preparing the country for the solution of the native question somewhat on the lines of the racial decrees of the Third Reich.

Since the natives may now be employed as unskilled labourers, the Indian element is no longer regarded as necessary. The Natal sugar industry provided, for example, employment for more than 2,500 Europeans and 8,000 Indians; but at the height of the cutting season over 40,000 natives are also employed. In recent years labour legislation (e.g. the Native Service Contract Act of 1932) has been enacted with a view to ensuring the supply of unskilled native labour. Again, in 1937, an Act was passed permitting the entry into the Union of contract native labour from adjoining British territories. "The gold boom involved an increase between 1932 and 1936 of nearly 100,000 in the numbers of Africans employed in the mines. The Union Government has estimated that by 1946, a further 140,000 will be required, bringing the total mine-labour force up to 450,000."²

It is interesting to note that the Colour Bar Legislation in Industries operate in making invidious distinctions even among the coloured races. The Cape Coloured and the Cape Malays are, for example, bracketed with the whites and are given the same privileged position; but the Asiatic and the Bantu are placed in the same category and are debarred from employment in skilled occupations.

Owing to the constant pressure brought to bear upon organised industries in order to substitute white labour for non-European, the position of Indian workers has become increasingly difficult. Here the problem is not one of economic motive; nor does it lend

¹ G. L. Steer, *Judgment on German Africa*.

² Leonard Barnes, *Empire or Democracy*, 1939.

itself to an equitable solution, because its character is not determined by the relation of prices and wages. What really matters is the removal of Indians from employment. The result is that unemployment among the Indian population has indeed become acute.

We may quote here an instance, cited by the South African Institute of Race Relations in its report, to show how the displacement of Indians from service to make room for whites takes place. It says:

"In May (1936) the Railways and Harbours Administration gave notice to eleven Indian stokers employed on the tugs and floating dock in Durban Harbour (whose wages ranged from £4 2 6 to £5 15 0 a month) that, in order to make room for white labourers, they could either accept other work at £1 16 4 a month or be dismissed. These men had been in the service of the Administration for periods of ten, twelve, and, in one case, twenty-seven years."¹

The present position of Indians in transport services² and public administration is that these avenues of employment are gradually coming to be entirely closed to them. Only recently there has been a slight increase in the number of Indians employed by the Railway Administration.

In pursuance of the civilised labour policy the industries which receive Government subsidies are asked to dismiss Indians from their employment. This is also the reason why the advantages of the Juvenile Act or of apprenticeship are not extended to them. In 1933 there were over 2,700 Indians employed in factories, but during the next five years the number steadily decreased. "Generally speaking the Natal-born Indian," observes the Report on Indian Colonization Enquiry Committee appointed by the Union of South Africa in 1933, "is educationally and socially in advance of his parents as he speaks English as well as his mother tongue, and while retaining his religion has become largely westernised and is no longer content to live as his father did on the limited rewards of rough and unskilled labour." It is only

¹ South African Institute of Race Relations. Annual Report, 1936.

² The total number of Indians employed on the South African Railways was 804 in 1931 and 609 in 1932; but at the date of the Union there were from 5,000 to 6,000 Indians in the employ of the Natal Government Railway alone, most of them indentured labourers.

natural that the members of this young generation should be eager to equip themselves for better prospects in employment, but it would not be correct to state that they migrate *en masse* to towns in search of new opportunities. In the face of extreme difficulties some of them acquire sufficient skill to enter the sphere of artisan labour. The Report admits that "though employers are not of one mind as to the relative capacities of Indians and Europeans, the general opinion expressed is that the Indian, owing to his natural alertness, is equal to the European in the performance of the semi-skilled repetition work of the modern factory; all agree that the Indian has one advantage over the European worker, namely, that he retains his employment permanently and if once trained to normal tasks is not disposed to change his occupation and seek employment elsewhere, as the European frequently does."

It is thus clear that all the doors to a decent livelihood are being closed to Indians in South Africa, eighty per cent. of whom are South African born and should be regarded as part of the South African people. This is due not to any serious economic competition but to restrictions deliberately imposed upon them on racial grounds. It is the capacity of Indians born in South Africa to prove themselves efficient in economic activity that has alarmed the Union of South Africa.

Wages are controlled by an official organisation called the Wage Board. Under the Wage Act of 1925, amended in 1930, this Board was set up to determine wage and labour conditions irrespective of race or colour. In practice, however, it functions in conforming with the discriminative policy of the Government. The Board is charged with a mission of placing every industry upon the "civilised labour" policy. Consequently, the wage regulation is not governed by economics but by the racial bar. According to the Economic and Wage Commission (1925), the average wage of the skilled white labourer was £1 per day and that of the unskilled native £1 per week; but however skilled an Indian or native labourer may be, he is never paid the rate stipulated for the white man.

Another notable feature in the wage system is the wide gap between the levels of skilled and unskilled labour. The ratio between the wages of these two forms of labour in the engineering trade in England, for example, was 14 to 10, while in South Africa

it was 60 to 10. There the rate for skilled labour is higher than in Europe, but it is considerably lower for unskilled labour in comparison with other industrial countries. The rate of wages received by unskilled Indian labourers is equal to that of the native.

But it should not be understood that Indian wage-earners crowd the manufacturing centres and depress, as it is sometimes claimed, the standard of living of the industrial proletariat. There are about 196,000 Indians in South Africa, and of these nearly 137,000 live in rural areas, either as farm labourers on sugar plantations in Natal or as petty cultivators in isolated places throughout the Union.

In other parts of the Empire overseas, the great majority of Indian immigrants work as farm labourers. In Malaya about 70 per cent. are employed on rubber estates and in tin mines, and an occupational survey of Indian immigrants in Ceylon shows that the proportion of Indians to Ceylonese is lowest among clerical and skilled workers and highest among the unskilled. Obviously this is the explanation of the differences in the standard of living between the two groups of workers, and it cannot be said with justice that the low standard of Indians drives the Ceylonese out of employment. The fact is, the former usually accepts work under conditions which are unfavourable to the employment of the latter. In Fiji, the Indians provide most of the available mobile labour, especially in mechanical occupations in which Fijians are not usually interested. The standard rates for unskilled labour are two shillings and sixpence per day in Suva and about two shillings in the country. In the cane-crushing season the mill labourers receive a standard wage of one shilling and eight pence with a bonus of sevenpence per day ; wages of cane-cutters vary from two shillings and sixpence to three shillings. Owing to rising costs of living, Indian workers in sugar industry organised a strike in 1943 for higher wages, and a large section of cane-growers came to form Unions (*Sanghas*) in order to protect their rights. The action of the Indian labourers was resented by both the Government and Fijian landlords who argued that the sugar industry in Fiji could not be maintained unless there was an adequate supply of *cheap* labour, and that the Indian demand for higher wages was not justified, especially at the most critical time of war !

Thus, the vast majority of the Indian immigrants do not com-

pete either with highly skilled industrial labourers or with unskilled native workers. They work in the plantations of the West Indies, Fiji, Malay and Ceylon as "coolies" and are obliged to remain at a low standard of living; because of the low wages the standard is no better than that of the social stratum in India from which they come. The average daily wage of an agricultural labourer in the West Indies, for example, does not exceed 30 cents (i.e. one shilling and three pence) and in East Africa it works out at ten shillings a month. In Ceylon the wages of the working classes vary between forty cents and one rupee a day. Wages Boards Ordinance (1944) decided that minimum rates for a working day of nine hours (including one hour for meal) should consist of basic rate and special allowance to be computed on the basis of the cost of living index number. The basic rate suggested by the Board was 58 cents for a male worker not under 16 years of age, 46 cents for a female worker not under 15 years of age and 41 cents for a child worker. These decisions were violently opposed by the planting interests.

So much for the Indian wage-earners in the Empire overseas. Under these circumstances of life and labour among non-white workers, it is not surprising that in recent years serious labour disturbances should have occurred in many parts of the Colonies. While Europeans admire the state of submissiveness of the non-white labouring classes, they do not take cognizance of the inevitable awakening of the human mind under subjugation and injustice. One of the means of securing social justice is trade unionism, but its development has until recently been resisted by the European interests in the overseas Empire. The Commission which investigated the riots in Trinidad in 1937 came to the conclusion that "one of the chief contributing factors to the disturbances was the absence of any form of machinery for collective bargaining, by which differences arising from time to time between employers and employed could find mutual adjustment. In our view it is essential that this position should be remedied if better relations between employer and employed are to be secured."

In South Africa the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 aimed at better relations between employers and employees engaged in every industry, trade and occupation excepting agricultural pursuits; but the Act excluded the great majority of native and Indian employees. Since 1927, however, Indians have been ad-

mitted to the trade unions in several industries in Natal, although this "concession" is regarded rather as a result of local trade (e.g. liquor and catering) conditions than as a proof of improved relations between the Indians and Europeans. In the same year, following the Cape Town Agreement, the Natal Indian Trade Union Congress was established with the object *inter alia* of educating the Indian wage-earning population in the constitutional means and methods of securing social justice.

II

Regarding the position of Indian traders, we find that most of the Indian immigrants in the Union of South Africa who open stores for the supply of commodities required by Indians and natives are not ex-indentured labourers. Most of them come from Bombay and Gujrat. They are by no means a charge on the communities where they carry on business, for they bring capital with them. Tailoring, mattress-making, boot and shoe repairing, painting and building are some of the semi-skilled trades in which they are usually engaged. The liquor and catering trades in Durban are largely in the hands of Indians, while in the Transvaal and the Cape they are also engaged in retail trade, their clients being chiefly the natives and the poorer members of the European community. And there is evidence that the Indian trader makes a special effort to encourage Native trade.

But the general policy of the Union Government aims at the restrictions of the trading rights of Indians. In Natal an Amendment to the Rural Dealers' Licensing Law has adversely affected the renewal of the licences of the Indian traders, and within the municipal areas regulations are made more stringent in order to restrict Indian hawkers. In the Transvaal it was frankly declared in June, 1935, that if Indians were forced out of the business, some 12,000 more white people would find employment!

In Kenya the Indian community consists mainly of petty traders, shopkeepers, artisans and clerks. The business of carpentry and mechanical trades are practically in the hands of Sikhs from the Punjab and of Hindu artisans from Kathiawar. Most of the merchants are from the city of Bombay, but the clerks and railway employees come almost entirely from Goa and Western India. There are not many Indian agricultural labourers in the Colony.

A statistical survey of occupations of the Indians in Kenya shows that among the Indian males 15 per cent. are employed in commerce, 8 per cent. in public administration, 5 per cent. in clerical occupations; 30 per cent. are children and the remaining 41 per cent. are employed in various industrial occupations. Of the Indian male workers, 19 per cent. are in public administration, 12 per cent. are wood-workers, 10 per cent. are in commerce; and among the employers, 52 per cent. are in commerce, but in recent years their numbers have decreased considerably.

The argument in favour of driving the Indians from the commercial field is set out in the Kenya Census of 1931. The Report says:

“It is becoming increasingly evident that the European will have greater difficulty in competing with the Indian trader. The analysis of prices, which was published as Memoir 6 of the Department of Statistical Research of the Governor’s Conference, showed that there exists a very marked difference between maximum and minimum prices of articles of ordinary consumption. This wide margin is almost entirely due to the differing standards of the two trading communities.”

It is of course true that Indian merchants and traders are able to sell commodities at cheaper rates, but such competition in trade is not only permissible but desirable in the interests of the bulk of the consuming public. So long as Indian traders do not adopt fraudulent practices, they should be given a legitimate share in the business.

But it has been observed by impartial observers that when the wholesale firms in Natal allow credit to the Indian traders because of their upright dealings and refuse it to the Europeans, the former are regarded as their rivals ! During the first world War the Indian traders increased in numbers both in South Africa and in Kenya and served the economic life of the community. Some of them became prosperous, but their success alarmed the Europeans, who raised an outcry after the War that the Indians were encroaching upon the preserves of the white community. The truth is that any attempt on the part of the Indians to enter into the modern competitive world economy

on equal terms is resented by the Europeans on the fallacious plea that it would bring about a disastrous change in the imperial economic structure, whose integrity must be preserved for the good of the Empire !

The group of merchants and dealers in Australia comprised 714, of whom 554 were hawkers. There were 366 engaged in agricultural pursuits, mainly as sugar-plantation labourers, and 201 in pastoral pursuits. "The Indian hawker," writes Lyng,¹ "is still a feature in Australia, adding colour to the landscape at the back of beyond. Though opinions may differ regarding the necessity for the Indian hawker, those who, like the writer, have had experience in the back-blocks, will give them their blessing. While the white business man, with his often magnificent travelling store, seldom moves far from the beaten tracks, the Indian hawker, with his heavily-laden pack-horse, will penetrate to the most remote places and there serve the lonely settler whom he supplies with clothing and the few luxuries enjoyed by these people, at a reasonable price, giving credit when desired."

It is worthy of note that in Kenya the demand for Indian artisans and carpenters shows a considerable increase on account of the extensive building operations during the last two decades. The descendants of indentured labourers who are born in the Empire overseas speak English, and therefore they are often employed as cooks, waiters, chauffeurs and junior clerks in mercantile houses. Some of them teach in the Indian schools, and although technically they are debarred from all municipal and state services in South Africa, yet a number of Indians have been recruited as police constables. The Orange Free State is entirely closed to them, but some hundred Indians are earning their livelihood there as waiters. In Africa and elsewhere the Europeans now prefer natives to serve as domestic servants, and consequently the number of Indians employed in European households is being reduced.

In Fiji, tailoring and laundry work, hawking and store-keeping, and taxi-owning are typical occupations which are mainly in Indian hands. Only a few have been drawn into industrial pursuits. In Uganda Indians own a large number of cotton ginneries, and also a sugar factory is run by an Indian capitalist. The South Indian Nattukottai *chettiar* community has invested considerable

¹ Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia*, 1935.

capital in Malaya in rubber estates, house property, etc., and generally does money lending business in all important towns. It has also secured a place in the trade and industry of Ceylon.

Lastly, there are a large number of Indians who settle on the land. They are divided into two main groups, namely, those who cultivate small holdings as market gardeners, and others who are engaged in growing plantation crops such as sugar-cane, coffee, rice, etc. Over 39 per cent. of the Asiatics in Natal are engaged as primary producers. The indentured Indian, on the expiry of his contract, often leases land and grows vegetables, mealies and tobacco. There are about 700 Indian planters who grow sugar-cane on their small holdings, and over 2,000 farmers are occupied in market gardening.

In Fiji, the bulk of the sugar cultivation is in the hands of Indians, either as tenant farmers under the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, or as independent peasants farming lands leased to them by the Fijian landlords. We have already mentioned the contributions which the Indian immigrants have made in British Guiana by introducing rice cultivation. Immigrants from the Punjab have been attracted to Malaya by either military or semi-military service; but now most of them have settled down as agriculturists. The arable lands are mostly owned by the *chettiar* community and by persons belonging to the upper and middle classes.

III

The conditions in which large numbers of the Indian immigrants, both urban and rural, are housed are deplorable. In the Union of South Africa housing and sanitary conditions of the coloured population are, indeed, disgraceful. An enquiry has shown that only about 5 per cent. are properly housed, and the vast majority of the families live in dirty hovels, for which they pay high rents. Owing to the restrictions imposed on them, Indians tend to congregate in common residential quarters where very little, if any, care is taken by the local government authorities to provide modern sanitary arrangements. Generally speaking, drains are unknown and the narrow alleys are strewn with heaps of garbage. Indeed, the Indian quarters of all towns in South Africa are filthy, and Mr. Calpin admits that "on the outskirts of the towns the

racketeers of European syndicates produce conditions of filth and poverty for which the rest of the community blames the Indian."

The usual housing accommodation in urban centres consists of one room which serves as bedroom, living room, kitchen, pantry and bathroom, and its size varies from 9 ft. \times 8 ft. to 6 ft. \times 5 ft. The average number of inhabitants of such a room is reported to be five—two adults and three children. The room has no ventilation, but if there be a small window it is usually covered with wood or sacks on account of the "dangerous locality." Many Indian families live in shacks and in tin shanties, which are unfit for human habitation. Yet the rent for such a room varies from £1 to £1 10 0 per month, although the landlord may not legally demand more than fifteen shillings. The landlord, be he Indian or European, has no scruples in such matters. His usual practice is to give his tenant a receipt only for the amount legally due to him, irrespective of the actual sum he is able to exact from the tenant. Indian traders in cities usually live in premises forming a part of the buildings in which their places of business are situated, but in rural areas and small towns the petty shop-keepers' residences are built of wattle and daub.

In view of inadequate provision of housing and civic amenities for Indians, the Union Government in their agreement with the Government of India recognised that Indians domiciled in the Union, who were prepared to conform to western standards of life, should be enabled to do so. Yet since the passing of the Housing Act in 1920, the Durban City Council has, for example, erected fifty "economic houses" at a cost of £26,708 and two hundred and twenty-five "sub-economic houses" mostly for its own employees at a cost of £117,000 for the Indian population of over 80,000. During the same period over seven hundred modern houses costing some £660,000 were built for a European population of over 100,000. The Durban City Council was rightly stigmatised by Sir Edward Thornton as a "laggard in the provision of housing for its non-European population."

Although conditions of life and work on overseas plantations and mines have sufficiently improved to promote the maintenance of family life, a large proportion of the unskilled immigrant labourers are obliged to live without their family. Those who are recruited on behalf of the planters and have security of employment for a number of years bring their family with them and this

is advantageous to the employers, because women and children over eight years of age take a large share in the work of the plantations.

But the housing accommodation even for those who are not fortunate enough to live a family life is inadequate and expensive. The plantation labourers have, of course, their "coolie lines," but these have all the essential features of the worst kind of slums. The Sugar Commission of 1930 condemned housing conditions throughout the West Indies.

We can well imagine what may be the state of health of those immigrants who are obliged to eke out an existence at a low subsistence level. The source of most diseases from which they suffer is poverty, and we have seen that the general level of the wages they receive is much too low to provide the means for obtaining adequate sustenance. No proper investigation has yet been made of their living conditions in the Empire overseas, but we are able to record some evidence of ill-health and malnutrition prevalent among them from various official documents.

The usual diet of poor Indians in Johannesburg is found to be far below the minimum standard. Their breakfast cannot be classified as a meal, and children often go to school without any food, or perhaps after a few morsels of unleavened dry bread (*chapati*). The mid-day meal is nothing more than a snack, and the principal source of nourishment, therefore, is dinner, which consists of a little curry and a large quantity of rice or a few *chapatis*. Occasionally the non-vegetarians eat mutton. Indians are fond of milk and save their pennies to buy it, but they cannot afford much fruit because of expense.¹

Some of the Indian immigrants who work in rural areas can supplement their wages by foodstuffs which they grow themselves in small holdings, but the state of nutrition of those who work in urban centres and mining districts is invariably bad.

An interesting survey of the health of school children at the Government Indian School at Kampala in Uganda was begun in 1934. We make an extract from the general conclusions:

"The results of these inspections have revealed a high proportion of physical defects, notably dental caries, gross tonsillar hypertrophy, and subnormal nutrition. . . ."²

¹ *Race Relations*, Vol. I, 1933.

² *East African Medical Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 6, 1937.

At the inspection in October, 1936, out of 354 pupils examined, 71.4 per cent. suffered from some defect in health. A table of the incidence per 1,000 of principal defects compared with elementary schools in England and Wales shows:

TABLE VIII

		Government <i>Indian School</i>	Elementary School <i>England and Wales</i>
Subnormal nutrition ..	..	107.3	113
Enlargement of tonsils and adenoids .. ..	.. ..	150	106.6
Diseases of teeth and gums ..	..	455	680.3
Splenomegaly .. ..	.. ..	209	—
Diseases of the eye .. ..	.. ..	42.4	9.5
Defects of vision .. ..	.. ..	115.8	93.4
Diseases of the skin .. ..	.. ..	50.8	11.5

The survey reveals the fact that the diet of the school children is deficient in food of protective value.

In Malaya, Dr. J. W. Field has made some observations on the state of nutrition among immigrant Indians. He says that the incidence of xerophthalmia and night-blindness is much higher among them than in other races. They have also low powers of resistance to disease or infection.¹ This is confirmed in the account of the dietary standards of the immigrant Indians in Malaya contained in a Report² of the Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire. Concerning the Indian communities in Malaya it notes that :

"The basis of the diet of the Southern Indian is parboiled rice supplemented with dhal, spices and coconut oil. . . . Coconut and sesame oils are the main sources of fat. . . . Analysis of the diets consumed suggests that they are not well balanced. The protein standards are low; protein of good quality, meat, fish, milk, eggs, is deficient. The fat is almost entirely of vegetable origin, and fat soluble vitamins A and D probably below optimum requirements. Supplementary sources of vitamin A, leafy vegetables and carotene-containing tubers are often absent.

¹ "Some observations on vitamin A starvation among immigrant Indians in Malaya," by J. W. Field. *Malayan Med. Jour.*, Vol. 6, 1931.

² Cmd. 6051, 1939.

"Associated with these deficiencies, possibly correlated with them, are low physical standards, poor stamina, susceptibility to bacterial disease and the occurrence of clinical evidences of lack of vitamin A, xerophthalmia and night blindness."

As regards labourers in rubber plantations, a survey conducted on 37 estates embracing nearly 3,600 children and adults—mostly Tamils from the Presidency of Madras—showed that there was "sub-nutrition of a serious degree" among the young Tamils on the plantations, and that the low vitality of the Indian labourers was mainly due to malnutrition.

The Report on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire also reveals the poor standard of nutrition among the Indians in British Guiana, and records the high incidence of nutritional and infectious diseases.

"It is of some importance to remember that . . . even the dietary of immigrant Indians born in India differs largely from that of the creole Indian descendants of immigrants, born in the Colony. . . . The average diet of the immigrant Indian shows a general shortage of protein, fat and vitamin A and a relative excess of carbohydrate. They drink almost no milk. With the passing of time, the creole Indian will wholly replace the immigrant Indian and the stricter and narrower dietetic customs of the latter will give place to the broader and more balanced diet of the former."

We are also informed that "the high incidence of megalocytic anaemia, most frequent in East Indian women, is another problem of grave social and economic importance."

The Governor of Trinidad made some observations on the health and nutrition of the East Indian labouring population in that Colony, one of the richest in the West Indian group, which deserve to be quoted here:

"I have with me a report written in 1935. It refers to a visit of a Dutch doctor from the Dutch East Indies. He was some weeks going through the country in association with one of our medical officers and he was obviously shocked by the evidence of malnutrition which he observed in those areas. He informed me that though he had twenty years' experience in the Dutch East Indies and although he had

first-hand knowledge of conditions resulting from vitamin deficiencies, he had never seen such distressing conditions as existed here among the East Indian labouring population, where apparently men and women suffered from an absence of all the known vitamins. At the hospital the medical officer took cases at random and showed the ravages which were being caused by deficiency diseases among the East Indian labouring population. There follows a list of these diseases, all due to this condition of malnutrition. The medical officer stated that every adult above the age of 20 years was affected, and that the working life of the population was reduced by at least 50 per cent. The medical officer was asked whether these people were aware of the nature of the disease which crippled them, and he said they were not; they took it as a matter of course. A condition of lethargy pervaded the whole community, which was only broken on festive occasions or in times of disorder.”¹

These examples, taken at random, should be sufficient to illustrate the fact that the majority of Indian immigrants share with the majority of the indigenous inhabitants the two conspicuous elements of dismal economic life, namely, undernourishment and disease. The distressing picture of health and nutrition of the Colonial masses is indeed disquieting to those who have so long been deluded into thinking that the principle of trusteeship is the basis of British rule in the Colonial Empire.

IV

The difficulties that face the Indian immigrant communities have undoubtedly been enhanced by the lack of educational facilities. Education is a fundamental need for enabling Indians to adjust themselves to the conditions of life in the overseas Empire. But for a long time, the Governments of the overseas Empire, Dominions and Colonies, in conformity to their policy of native education, cared little or nothing about the education of the children of Indian immigrants. Until recently that task was left entirely in the hands of the Indians themselves; but the economic circumstances of their life, racial stigmatization,

¹ *The West Indies Today*. Published by the International African Service Bureau, London.

bilingual difficulties, the lack of efficient teaching staffs and a host of other complex factors which prevail in repressive environments have prevented them from developing an appropriate system of education for Indian children.

Yet these children constitute ideal material for the teacher, for they are ambitious, responsive and alert. Indeed, there is no question of their educability; they make striking progress once adequate facilities are provided for them. Regardless of all social and economic handicaps, the Indian communities must strenuously strive to overcome the difficulties that confront them in extending the influence of education.

Perhaps the most depressing feature of education among the Indian immigrants throughout the Empire overseas is the neglect in providing adequate facilities for teaching girls. The importance of education for girls is recognised in theory more than in practice throughout the British Colonies, but it is a responsibility which rests mainly upon the progressive section of the Indian communities. They should realise that the Europeans and the natives alike judge the standard of Indian social life upon the measure of social freedom accorded to their women. It is for the Indians themselves to cast aside such barriers as stand in the way of female education. We are informed that in Fiji the Indian immigrants are "afraid to let the girls leave the protection of the home" after ten years of age, even to the special girls' schools provided by the Christian missions.

Further difficulties in the way of widespread female education arise from the practice of early marriage, for many girls marry at fourteen or fifteen years of age or even younger, and the supply of teachers is thereby limited. Addressing the South African Association for the Advancement of Science on the social and cultural opportunities available to the non-European in South Africa, Mr. M. Webb observed:¹

"If we accept the principle that no race can advance far beyond the level of its womanhood, and that the centre of any cultural life that is to affect a community is the home, we must recognise that the position of Indian women is a factor working against the advance of their people.

"Among Indian women Purdah, more firmly entrenched

¹ *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 30.

in Natal than in modern India, and the prevailing attitude of Indian men to their women. hold back the cultural advances of the community. Vedic societies, recreational associations, a multiplicity of clubs and groups, are all for men. The women remain at home."

In South Africa, since the Cape Town Agreement, the Union Government have recognised that Indians should be given adequate facilities both for general and technical education. In 1927 they declared their policy in the following terms:

"The Union Government firmly believe in and adhere to the principle that it is the duty of every civilized Government to devise ways and means and to take all possible steps for the uplifting of every section of their permanent population to the full extent of their capacity and opportunities, and accept the view that, in the provision of educational and other facilities, the considerable number of Indians who will remain part of the permanent population should not be allowed to lag behind other sections of the people."

Accordingly, funds have been provided for the building of an Indian Government school in Estcourt and the annual Government grant for technical education for Indians in Durban was increased from £250 to £400. In 1934-35, the Natal Government allotted £19,000 towards Indian education in addition to the subsidy received from the Union. Between 1926-27 and 1934-35, the total expenditure on education for Indians in South Africa increased from £28,430 to £86,000. The response of the Indian communities to the facilities for primary education in Natal is shown by the school enrolments, which increased from 9,330 in 1926 to over 23,600 in 1938. A reference should be made to the establishment of a college¹ in Durban which rightly bears the name of the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, the first Agent-General of the Government of India in South Africa. While its initial cost of about £20,000 was met by subscriptions raised among the Indian community, the Natal Government has accepted responsibility for its recurrent expenditure. It is the only institution where Indian pupils can receive secondary education. The Natal University College excludes non-Europeans from its full-time and

¹ The motto of the Sastri College is "Aequem servare mentem," meaning "Keep an open mind."

part-time lectures, but it has recently established special courses for non-European students, which are held at Sastri College on Fridays and Saturdays. The students (the majority of whom are Indians) are, for the most part, teachers wishing to take their B.A. degree. The South African Native College at Fort Hare also admits Indians, but their enrolment has so far been insignificant. Technical classes are provided in Durban for Indians in an Indian school. They are not admitted to the Natal Technical College, which is specially equipped for technical instruction. There are, unfortunately, no evening classes giving general cultural opportunities to the non-European.

Adequate provision for primary and secondary schools, however, is the essential need of the Indian communities. The Report of the Natal Provincial Commission on Education shows that nearly half the Indian children of schoolgoing age are refused admission because the existing schools, where they may be allowed, are overcrowded. The neglect of female education by Indians, to which we have already referred, is strikingly illustrated by the figures of school children and school teachers in Natal for 1937. There were 4,272 Indian girls in Natal schools, as against 13,810 boys, and 445 Indian teachers of whom only 46 were women. Among the Europeans, however, there were 1,896 teachers, of whom 1,441 were women. The repeated appeal of the Indian High Commissioner to make a substantial provision for education of Indian children has had no response from the Natal Provincial Administration.

The state of education among the Indian communities in the Transvaal is deplorable. The housing equipment, teaching staffs and Government grants for education do not bear testimony to any attempt to put into effect what has been described as the "uplift" clause of the Cape Town Agreement. In the absence of facilities for higher education, children have to leave school after Standard VI. Although in all Government schools the medium of instruction is English, a number of Indian vernacular schools have recently been set up by the Indian communities, but these schools receive no grants-in-aid from the Government. Further, the policy of racial segregation in the Union does not encourage voluntary educational enterprise among Indians. In Johannesburg a rich Moslem merchant built a boarding school and a workshop for technical training; but, "owing to the limits of the

locations in which Indians can live," writes (1945) one of my British friends, "they have to pay about three times as much for a house as a European."

Compared with the educational facilities available for Indians in South Africa, the provision made for them in Kenya may be regarded as satisfactory. There are over seventy schools of various grades, where over 7,000 pupils receive primary education. According to the census of 1931, Indians aged twenty years or less numbered 19,284. Of these, 218 did not specify their exact age and 6,028 were aged four or less, leaving 13,038 as more or less of school-going age. Of the 4,974 Indians aged twenty or under, returned as receiving instruction, about 12.5 per cent. were receiving private tuition or attending non-registered schools. The percentage of those being taught in English was 46.8 per cent., in an Indian language 49.8 per cent. and in Arabic 3.4 per cent. There is one High School in Nairobi and one in Mombasa which offer a standard as high as the London Matriculation and the Cambridge Junior and School Certificate Examinations. While twelve schools are maintained by the Government, thirty-six receive grants from Government funds.

If literacy is taken to mean ability to read and write an Indian vernacular fluently, then over 50 per cent. of the Indian population in Kenya may be classified as literate. It must be said to the credit of Indian pupils that they show a keen interest in their studies and are able to demonstrate that racial superiority is not, after all, a question of a white epidermis.

"European children," observes Leys, "in Kenya do less well in competitive examinations than Indian children, though the education they get is four times¹ as costly as the education the Indian children get, and though, of course, the examinations are conducted in a language that is spoken in few of the homes the Indian boys and girls come from."

In Uganda there are two schools for Indians, one in Kampala and one in Jinja, which provide education up to the standard of the Junior Cambridge Examination. Only since 1932 have these two educational institutions received full financial support from the Government. The elementary schools, numbering over thirty-eight, are financed by Indians themselves, but their management

¹ The average annual amount spent by the State upon the education of a white child is about £2 18 3, and of a coloured child 8d.

is supervised by an Advisory Council for Indian Education having a majority of nominated Indian members and presided over by the Director of Education. The total annual grant from the Government is about £1,500, but the schools for the Khoja community receive a subsidy from His Highness the Aga Khan. "The cost of Asiatic education is in part financed from the proceeds of an education tax of 20s. per annum, levied and spent upon the Asiatic population."¹

But the education provided in these schools is only elementary. Indian pupils who desire to proceed further may avail themselves of the secondary educational facilities at Nairobi. For higher education Indians are usually sent to their own country. Provision is now made for giving advanced education to Africans from Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar at Makerere in Uganda. Each of these colonies has made a contribution to the endowment of Makerere College,² and it is hoped that no restrictions will be imposed preventing Indians from taking full advantage of the College. The European communities in East Africa, although not opposed to higher education for the native, asserted that "there were more important needs, such as roads and a settlement scheme, which deserved preference."³

While the Indian schools in Zanzibar are run on a communal basis, those in Tanganyika have no such bias and are open to all denominations. Instruction in the lower standards is given in Indian vernaculars (Gujarati or Urdu) and English is introduced at a later stage. For secondary education there is a government school in Dar-es-salaam which provides instructions up to the senior Cambridge Examination.

In Zanzibar five schools managed by Indian communities receive grants from the Government. The total number of pupils in Indian-aided schools in 1938 was 932 boys and 657 girls, while in those not receiving assistance there were 438 boys and 305 girls, thus making a total of 2,332 pupils in the Indian schools. The annual report of the Protectorate notes that the majority of Indian children of school age are under instruction. Four of the

¹ Lord Hailey, *An African Survey*, 1939.

² Makerere and its associated institutions offer vocational courses in agriculture, veterinary science, training in teaching, engineering and medicine. The East African Education Commission recommended that effective co-ordination of such post-secondary education would necessitate a central college.

³ See Minutes, The Kenya Legislative Council, April 20, 1939.

Indian schools supply a full education up to the "middle" stage; the remainder are elementary only, or elementary and middle.

"In 1936 it was decided that Indian pupils might be admitted to the Rural Middle Boarding School, on condition that they had an adequate knowledge of Swahili and were willing to accept all the rules of the school, especially as regards food, clothing and worship."²

The state of Indian education in Mauritius is better than that in Africa. Here primary education, though not compulsory, is provided free by the Government and there is no racial discrimination in the State-aided schools. Until recently the administration of these schools was in the hands of the Christian missions.

In addition to over 175 primary schools, there are 12 institutions where boys and girls are prepared for the Cambridge Local Examinations. The Royal College at Curepipe is a Government school for the higher education of boys up to the age of twenty; while in order to meet the increasing demand for secondary education among Indians, an enterprising gentleman from Madras founded the New Eton College at Rose Hill in 1932, which prepares pupils for higher education.

In contrast to Mauritius, the education of the children of the Indian immigrants in Malaya is extremely unsatisfactory. It could not be otherwise, for its responsibility is vested in the estate owners rather than in the Government of the Colony. Teachers are usually selected from the labourers themselves, who have "scanty knowledge of even their vernacular languages." The management of the schools, which are not as a rule registered, rests entirely in the hands of the estate officials and as they do not receive grants from the Government, there is no supervision. The comparatively well-to-do Indians send their children to English schools in the towns; but there the medium of instruction is English and no provision is made for teaching the common Indian vernacular (e.g. Tamil) even as a second language. There are, however, Tamil schools which are provided by plantation authorities. In 1937, 469 estate schools received small Government grants-in-aid and 212 were unaided. A type of private school established by a "proprietor-teacher" who runs it for profit has also come into existence.

Conditions are somewhat better in Fiji. In spite, however, of

² Annual Report. Zanzibar, 1938.

the great improvement in the educational facilities for Indian children there, as compared with conditions at the time of the abolition of the indenture system, there still exists an inequality of opportunity between Indians and Fijians for which there is no valid excuse. In 1932 the Government spent £18,000 on Fijian education and only £8,700 on Indian. The disproportion in the school population between Fijians and Indians, as compared with the total population, can be seen from the following figures. In 1934 only 3,507 Indian as compared with 9,078 Fijian boys, and only 1,078 girls as compared with 6,020 Fijian girls, were being educated. The total population of the two races in 1934 was 102,306 Fijians and 80,991 Indians. In 1935 Bishop Radford wrote: "There are 97 Fijian elementary schools receiving grants-in-aid to meet native and missionary contributions, and for Indians there are 7 Government and 41 assisted schools. The disparity between the two numbers of schools is only partly explained by the fact that there are fewer Indian centres than Fijian villages. But the disparity between Fijian and Indian schooling is graver above the elementary school line. Fijians have 6 Governmental provincial residential schools (and) . . . the Queen Victoria Memorial School. The only secondary school open to Indian boys is the central Government Indian school at Natabua. . . ."¹

It should be noted that the educational potentialities of Indian pupils are high. "The Indian children we saw in schools," writes Dr. C. W. Mann, "were keen and alert, and if we couple with this the general parental belief in the value of European education, it will be realized that the Indian schools have great possibilities."² Two difficulties, however, should be mentioned. The practice of early marriage diminishes the female school population (only about one-tenth of the total number of Indian girls of school age at present go to school); and this results in a small number of Indian school mistresses. Secondly, the question of language is a hindrance to real progress. The Letters Patent of the Colony recognise five Indian languages, and in addition two other Indian languages are spoken. The task of standardising the medium of instruction admits of no easy solution.

In the West Indies, which are styled "a real employers' paradise," the state of education is deplorable, because those who

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1935.

² C. W. Mann, *Education in Fiji*, 1935.

control the policy of the Colonial Government do not appreciate the need for making the masses literate, and even consider that the leaven of education is dangerous because it encourages their disposition to revolutionary tendencies! The Education Commission which visited the West Indies in 1931-32 observed that "There is a complete lack of system and clearly defined principles, and such principles as are vaguely recognised are applied with a widely varying degree of strictness. No preparation for compulsion, such as the registration of children of school-going age, or the marking out of areas into school units, seems ever to have been contemplated. . . ." In recent years the percentage of illiteracy has, however, fallen from 49 to 43 in Trinidad.

A large number of the elementary schools in Trinidad belong to the Canadian Mission, which has also established institutions providing girls' secondary education and for the training of teachers. It is at these Mission schools that most of the Indian children receive a modicum of elementary education.

While Indian pupils in Jamaica depend almost entirely upon the Government elementary schools, the Indian communities in British Guiana are faced with the difficulty of having to send their children to denominational institutions run by various Christian religious orders.

Before leaving the subject of the education of Indian immigrants, there is one more aspect to which attention should be drawn. It is the problem of educating adults. Neither the Governments of the countries to which Indians emigrate nor the advanced Indian communities living there have done anything towards the provision of adult education. Yet Indian adults are keen to take advantage of whatever opportunities may be offered to them.

Speaking of the non-European Library Service in South Africa, provided by the Carnegie Corporation, Mr. M. Webb observes,¹ "Only very few natives have acquired the reading habit. . . . On the other hand, many Indians are voracious readers. Their demand upon this Library Service far exceeds the limitations which the funds available to the service impose."

It is not realised that the neglect of potentially useful citizens is a bad economy, and tends to develop those circumstances which accentuate racial and cultural differences among constituent elements of the population of the Empire overseas.

¹ *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 30, pp. 1095-6.

V

One of the main arguments in favour of the White Dominion policy is that Indian immigrants have a low standard of living, and in consequence of wage competition they are likely to bring down the white labourers to their level. But there is nothing rigid about a standard of living—it is flexible and can be considerably raised or lowered by circumstances. And it is one of the primary functions of a civilized state to raise it by the extension and development of social services.

Generally speaking, the share of social services that is allotted to Indian communities in the Empire overseas is pitifully meagre. The uncertainty regarding their status is largely responsible for this inadequate attention, both in the Dominions and in the Colonies. Both the State and the people regard them as “strangers within the gate”: Indians are an alien element in the Empire overseas. In South Africa, in view of the increasing tendency in the legislation of the Union Government to segregate the non-white population and to enforce the colour bar, it is only to be expected that services supported by parliamentary grants should also discriminate against the Indians.

“Whereas Natives . . . get only so much of social services as they pay for by taxation there is evidence that Indians pay much more in taxes than the value of the social services they receive. Speaking recently . . . Mr. S. M. Nana, Secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress, pointed out that Indians pay far more in taxes in proportion to their numbers than any other race in South Africa, and yet Indians receive far less in services than either Europeans or Coloured. Old Age Pensions for Indians are £6 per annum as compared with the £42 received by Europeans and £21 by Coloureds.”¹

Now, social services comprise provision for health, housing, sanitation, education and other amenities of life in a community. We will see to what extent Indians receive these benefits. Under normal circumstances, non-official voluntary organisations come forward to supplement the State efforts in this direction, and through their services develop inter-racial co-operation; but, to quote from a report² of the South African Institute of Race

¹ *Race Relation News*, January, 1939.

² See Eighth Annual Report, 1937.

Relations, "There is a very large body of public opinion which is strongly opposed to all forms of practical co-operation between Europeans and non-Europeans, except through Governmental agencies, and there are signs that this opposition is becoming more determined. It has powerful support in the Government and in Parliament. . . ."

Indians in South Africa rely mainly upon the health and nursing organisations of the Christian missions, and it must be acknowledged that they do their utmost to make amends for the omissions of the Government. There are as yet no proper facilities for the training of Indian nurses or midwives. Since members of all other communities except those of the Indian are allowed to receive training as nurses and midwives in the Government hospitals, St. Aidan's Mission Hospital in Durban has made a special arrangement to offer facilities to Indians. But, to quote from a report of the Mission, "The Government Health Department has refused to register it as an Indian Training School, and has even threatened to close the hospital altogether. . . ." The official explanation of this action was that the hospital in its present stage of development could not be used as a training centre.

In Johannesburg there are two small wards in the non-European section of the General Hospital, one for Hindus and one for Mohammedans, each with about six beds. The Indian community has raised a fund for providing special wards in the hospitals at Johannesburg and Pietermaritzburg, and has organised a Social Welfare Association, which employs a whole-time-worker, runs a clinic for women and children and arranges medical attendance at the Indian Girls' School. But these efforts, commendable as they are, do not meet the requirements of those who live and labour in the rural districts.

In the Transvaal the Union Government contributed a sum of £1,250 towards an Indian ward in the Pretoria General Hospital, and a maternity and child-welfare clinic was opened through private donations in the Pretoria Asiatic Bazar and also in Pietermaritzburg. Provision has been made by the Johannesburg City Council for the establishing of an Asiatic infant welfare centre and employing a health visitor. As to the extent of service given to Indian and African population, we note that for children in need of care there is accommodation for 7,500 Europeans, but

"the whole coloured has to be content with 1,400 places." In the Transvaal, under the Blind Persons Act, 1936, pensions are provided for European and Coloured blind persons of 19 years of age and over ; but Asiatics, hence Indians, are excluded from the benefits of the Act. Representations for their inclusion were unsuccessful. A year later, however, the Minister of the Interior authorised payments of £6 per head per annum, from funds at the disposal of the Immigration Commission, to the blind members of the Indian population.

In Kenya, Indians are admitted only to hospitals provided for the Africans, but there are two dispensaries run by Indians, one of which serves the Khoja community only. Neither maternity nor nursing services are available free to the Indians.

In Uganda, the care of health forms but a small part of the normal activities of the Medical and Public Health services. There is a hospital for Asiatics which has accommodation for twenty-nine beds, and another at Jinja for six beds; but these hospitals are mainly for the treatment of all the non-native civil servants.

While the Hindu Free Dispensary at Dar-es-Salaam in Tanganyika is open to all classes and races without distinction, that set up by the Moslems is exclusively for the Khoja community.

In Ceylon, the Ordinance No. 9 of 1912 imposes on planters the responsibility of providing medical aid and free maternity benefit. They are also required to provide housing accommodation with proper sanitary arrangements. But, in practice, most of the hospitals and dispensaries are unsatisfactory. Not more than 110 estates employ midwives, although maternity benefits are paid for by the labourers. In Malaya, the Indians have access to all Government hospitals, but these are situated in important trading centres only. The Malayan Labour Code requires that all plantations shall provide medical attendance and a hospital but in 1937 only 149 large estates were reported to have established dispensaries and hospitals.

From this somewhat inadequate account of the social services among the Indian immigrants, we may conclude that no serious efforts are made to improve their conditions of life. The whole trend of government policy would appear to ignore their existence as citizens and to maintain them at a social status so depressed that their segregation becomes justifiable. Europeans object to the

presence of Indians amongst them on the grounds that their standard of living is low, that they are dirty and disease-ridden; but we hear of little that is done by the Governments to ameliorate such conditions.

As regards the facilities for the education of the Indian immigrant and his children in the various Dominions and Dependencies, the salient features of the system may be noted as follows. The machinery of education, as we have seen, is provided from three sources: the State, the missions and the plantation owner. The missions were first in the field, and the work they have done, both among the native and the Indian communities, cannot be rated too highly. Even as late as 1925, 80 per cent. of the schools in British Tropical Africa were run by missions. Yet in spite of the early and valuable start made by the missions, the State authorities have failed so far to provide adequate numbers of schools especially in the advanced grades, to meet the need of Indian children and adolescents.

On the whole, the plantation schools of the West Indies, Malaya and Ceylon are hopelessly inefficient, insufficient in numbers and even non-existent in some areas, in spite of the fact that in most districts the plantation owners are required by law to provide them. Government supervision is usually inadequate and often entirely lacking.

The problem of higher and technical education cannot be satisfactorily solved until the racial bar is removed from the policy of the Dominions and Colonies where Indians have settled. In South Africa, for instance, Indians are debarred from skilled occupations because the provision of a supply of educated and skilled Indian labour could not but increase difficulties. The development of advanced and technical education must, therefore, proceed hand in hand with the better adjustment of relations between the Indian and European communities.

In recreational activities also, the colour bar and racial prejudices result in humiliating discrimination. The principal cinemas in South Africa, for instance, are closed to non-Europeans, and the alternatives are typical of the squalid conditions under which the majority of Indians live. In Durban, writes Mr. M. Webb, ". . . there are two cinemas in the Indian quarter where films are shown to Indians and natives. . . . These two cinemas cater for the poorer Indians and natives, and are distasteful to any

person of refinement. Here again the wealthier Indian suffers from a sense of injustice. He is willing to pay the price of admission to the principal cinemas, . . . but he is denied admission on the grounds of race.”¹

The literate Indian is an avid reader, yet he is debarred from public libraries; and library services for non-Europeans, though they exist in some areas, are entirely inadequate. “Even the sea observes a colour bar” in South Africa, and Europeans, natives and Indians are carefully segregated on the bathing beaches of the Union.

Religious and other customs have to a considerable extent isolated the Indians from other communities, and by accentuating racial and social differences have tended to widen the breach between Indian and European. Some prejudices on the part of the European are not, however, worthy of consideration. “There is nothing morally wrong with a man being a vegetarian and a teetotaler,” said Lord Crewe, and the fact that Indians do not consume pork or beef or rum, according to their religious beliefs, should not count against them. On the other hand, the practice of early marriage among Indian girls is one legitimately open to criticism. Yet the Indians are not entirely to blame in retaining this element in their social life, because in many districts, such as Fiji, the large excess of the male population over the female (this being often the result of immigration restrictions) results in a pressing demand for brides.

In order, for the Indians, to take an unobtrusive place in the life of the country where they have settled, there must undoubtedly be adjustment and compromise. The application of uniform principles in circumstances which are characterised by diverse conditions may be difficult, but it is not impossible to find a solution having regard to differences of habits and customs of the Indian population. It is a noteworthy fact that the rigidity of social customs and habits is considerably relaxed among the immigrant communities. Certain caste prejudices disappear and the various groups live together as close neighbours. Those who are born in the communities overseas do not recognise caste restrictions, and not only do they eat and drink together, but intermarry. Indian girls and women live a much freer life and do not strictly observe the *Purdah*.

¹ *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 30.

Chapter Six

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

. I

We have seen that opportunities for Indians in the British Empire overseas, either as immigrants or settlers, are narrow and severely restricted. The limitations imposed upon them arise largely from racial prejudice and short-sighted economic policy; and they have created antagonism between India and other parts of the Empire. But India cannot remain within the Empire if the problems relating to the position of Indians in the Dominions and Colonies are not solved in a manner altogether different from the attempts hitherto made merely to meet the exigencies of the immediate situation. Not only must she be placed on a footing of equal political status with the Dominions, but she must be a *free* partner in all endeavours to readjust her relations with the Empire countries and the world as an independent sovereign state.

The immigration policy of the various Dominions in so far as Indians are concerned exhibits a great degree of similarity. The policy is one of exclusion and not of regulation and selection. Trade competition is alleged to be one of the real causes underlying the demand for racial segregation in South Africa and Kenya; but an impartial occupational survey shows that this factor is negligible, and that the Indian settlers do not normally create difficulties with the natives or with the other immigrant communities. If Indians, whether as traders, moneylenders or landowners, exploit them, every step taken to restrain such tendencies will be appreciated in India. The charge that they care little for the progress of the natives is mainly untrue; on the contrary, it is admitted that the Indians in Kenya have given them training in skilled occupations (e.g. carpentry, agriculture, etc.) to a greater extent than the European has done.¹ At any rate, the policy of segregation is not adopted out of concern for the advancement of indigenous races.

¹ See, Evidence of Mr. C. M. Dobbs, Provincial Commissioner, before Joint Select Committee. *H.C. Paper No. 156*, 1931.

As regards wage competition, the statistics do not bear out the charge that the Indian immigrants "undercut and eliminate the white artisan by sheer pressure of economic law." Should such circumstances develop, they might easily be controlled by minimum wage legislation. It cannot be argued that the purpose of preserving Dominion wage standards or protecting Dominion labour might not be fulfilled by some form of legislative enactment. The suggestion of a quota system should be given due consideration on the understanding that the immigrant is not taking somebody else's job. At the second British Commonwealth Relations Conference held in Sydney in 1938, an Indian visitor put the case as follows:

"It is open to every Dominion which is in need of greater population to decide how many people it will admit in a year; what their qualifications should be; what are the laws under which they should work; but when these conditions have been decided, and a regular plan has been formed, there should be no ban on the entry of Indians. India ought to be among the countries whose nationals are regarded as eligible immigrants."

The circumstances of Indian emigration in the past and especially the fact that the great majority of Indians come from low economic and social classes in their own country have undoubtedly contributed to the complexities of the problem of adjusting their position in the Empire overseas. The influx of uncontrolled immigration can, however, be regulated by adequate measures, but a *policy* of discrimination against Indians which is rooted in racialism is unjustifiable and will no longer be tolerated by them; for they know that racial inequality inevitably strengthens the fetters of political bondage.

It also appears that the Dominions and the Colonial Office are apprehensive of circumstances that may tend to bring the "atmosphere" of Indian politics into the internal affairs of the Empire overseas. The opposition to Indian settlers' claims for civic and political rights is born of fear and prejudice. The Union of South Africa and the Colonial Administrations fear that Indian immigration may result in a still greater disproportion between the non-European and the European population, and therefore their policy is to welcome immigrants from Europe as a counter-

poise to the coloured population. In pursuance of the "White Australia" policy, the Dominion allowed an increased influx of Southern Europeans. Greek, Italian and Yugoslav immigrants in 1937 numbered nearly 8,000, and in 1938 the total was over 5,000. For the twelve months ending September, 1939, the total figure amounted to 10,992 persons, of whom only 881 were British. It is to be noted that of the balance of 10,111 no less than 5,321 were Germans! And yet the avowed policy of the Commonwealth is to keep her population homogeneous and to safeguard against the intrusion of "alien thought and feeling" in the country. Whatever happens, the unalterable policy must be to bolt all the doors against the admission of coloured races.

The density of population in Canada, which is about twice the size of India, is about three per square mile, and immigration in the pre-war years (1911-1914) averaged over 300,000 a year. In 1913 alone she admitted 402,432 immigrants. In following years there has been an increasing number of Slavs, especially Ukrainians, Russians and Poles. Therefore the exclusion of Indians from the Dominion on economic grounds is just an excuse to defend the discriminative policy based on racial antagonism.

Thus, in considering the problem of immigration, the Dominions and Colonies are guided by the central motive that a permanent population of white settlers must rule over non-European majorities. It is bluntly put forward by a British-Canadian when he said, "All we demand is the domination of our own race."¹ The Empire migration policy is framed, we are told, with the object "of keeping the British Empire British." The majority of the white settlers within the Empire should consist, therefore, of men and women of the British stock, but if they are not responding adequately to the economic and social attraction of the Empire overseas, the immigration of other white races should be encouraged by "a carefully regulated flow of other immigrants of assimilable types."

We have no space here to raise the general question whether severe restrictions upon immigration in the circumstances of the modern world are not injurious to the countries imposing them; but we would refer to an author who holds the view that "when population control has proved effective, it has not always proved

¹ T. Mactunes, *Oriental Occupation of British Columbia*.

wise." Reuter says,² "Spain undertook, more systematically than most of the west European nations, to control the type of her population. The Moors, her industrious and prosperous but religiously and racially heterodox citizens, she expelled in the interests of racial and religious unity. The undesigned result was the destruction of the possibility of industrial development. In the interests of religion and the redistribution of financial power, she expelled the Jews with results disastrous to her business and commercial prosperity. And, finally, and again in the interests of a decadent religious orthodoxy, she destroyed her intellectuals and thereby insured herself a long period of religious orthodoxy and intellectual stagnation."

But in the background of the immigration policy of the Dominions and Colonies, there is the urgent problem of consolidating imperial interests, especially when other powers now demand their right to share the monopoly so long enjoyed by Great Britain. It is argued that a predominance of British elements naturally loyal to the Empire is a necessity for the purpose of maintaining the *status quo* of the Empire. General Smuts dreams of "the United States of Africa," comprising the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Swaziland and East African territories together with the Mandated areas. A new Colonial League was formed with the object of carrying on agitation in favour of maintaining the Colonial *status quo* established at Versailles in 1919.

The extent to which Africa and Polynesia have been divided among the Colonial Powers is seen from the following table.

TABLE IX
*Percentage of territories in the hands of the European
Colonial Powers.*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Polynesia</i>
1876	10.8	56.8
1900	90.4	98.9
1932	96.6 ¹	100.0

Since the Peace Treaty (1919) the balance between European powers in their scope for the exploitation of Africa had altered; and with the conquest of Abyssinia, almost the last of the in-

¹ E. B. Reuter, *Population Problems*, 1933.

² The Italian Conquest of Abyssinia brings the figure nearly to 100.

dependent African territories, Africa had once more become a pawn in European diplomacy. What was dimly realised in the past had become clear to discerning eyes of all coloured races. Behind the strange scenes in European rivalries, there is the question of relationships between European and non-European. Africa is one of the "Naboth's vineyards" of the world, and once again a scramble for its possession has begun, and the dark continent may again be repartitioned for the benefit of the European colonial powers demanding "*Lebensraum*"—living space.

It is maintained that the industrial nations cannot extend their activities overseas without the possession of colonies. For the purpose of controlling the sources of raw material and for the expansion of finance and capital, the colonies are not "millstones round our necks," as Disraeli observed in 1852, but they are now valuable assets to the metropolis. The growth and extent of the British colonial possessions are shown in the following table:

TABLE X
The Colonial Possessions of Great Britain.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Area (million sq. miles)</i>	<i>Population (millions)</i>
1860	2.5	145.1
1880	7.7	267.9
1899	9.3	309.0
1932	13.5	466.5

Since Great Britain is the foremost owner of colonial possessions, it is her policy not to encourage alien influence within these territories. The entire field must be reserved for the British capitalists retaining high monopoly profits for the nation. The Colonial Empire in its mercantile aspect values its possessions as a source of raw materials for the British industries; in its industrial aspect they provide a preferential market for the disposal of British manufactured goods, and finally, in its financial aspect, they offer an extensive field for the investment of surplus British savings. Although capital investment in the Colonial Empire shows a declining tendency, its potential scope is recognised; and, as a British writer says, "Many developments in recent years suggest that, other things being equal, the British investor is

likely to do better, even in this field, if he invests under the British flag."¹ In their last year of operation before the occupation of Malaya by Japanese army, three British tin-mining companies earned profits of "phenomenal size." For example, Tronoh, with a capital of £300,000, made a net profit, after taxation, etc., of £169,190 and paid a dividend of 55 per cent. Sungei Besi, with a capital of only £144,000 made no less than £95,731 and paid 58.5 per cent. dividend.

It has been suggested that the appetite for colonial possessions among the European powers may be satisfied by an equitable distribution of raw materials. But the proposal ignores the basic fact of monopoly, the lure of which makes the colonies so attractive. It is the lure of high monopoly profits, of commercial gain, and of political aggrandisement that renders the colonial question a potent source of conflict. Besides, the powers value their colonial possessions as the strategic points of the trade routes. Therefore Sir Samuel Hoare's (now Lord Templewood) suggestion for avoiding international rivalry among the industrial nations by a system of dividing colonial raw materials received nothing more than a murmur of approval. The proposal was not, however, a novel one. After the first world War, following the German re-occupation of the Rhineland, the French Government issued a memorandum declaring that the common reservoir of raw materials produced in the colonies and the purpose of marketing surplus European production should not lead to rivalry; and that the problems related thereto should be approached "from the point of view of equality of economic rights and the co-operation of credit between European states." But Japan elaborated Sir Samuel's proposal into a question of redistribution of the colonies, declaring that "the unsatisfied needs of certain nations for territory suitable for colonization" should not be ignored.

Another suggestion that is often put forward is the establishment of an international government for all backward peoples. But such an extension of the principles of the Mandatory protection system, however logical it may appear, is not possible without a fundamental change in the working of finance capitalism. Besides, the Mandatory System has in practice operated as a subtle form of annexation. Reviewing its operation from 1919-

¹ "Colonies and Raw Materials," by H. D. Henderson. *Oxford Pamphlet No. 7*, 1939

39, it is noticed that the indigenous peoples of the Mandated Territories had no voice in the matter of choosing the particular Mandatory Power under whose administration they were placed; nor were they given the privilege of expressing even an opinion on the policy which affected their material interests. In fact, these territories have been administered very much as colonies of the Powers concerned. Each Mandatory introduced a form of administration similar to that of its own Colonial Dependencies.

As regards the suggestion for an international government in the treatment of colonial peoples, it may, under the present circumstances, mean organised exploitation of colonial peoples by a combination of Great Powers instead of only one. The famous Van Zeeland Report contained schemes of such international capitalist co-operation; but how could the principle of equal opportunity for all be observed when the competing Powers profit by the preferential economic system of their own Colonial territories ?

As regards the Dominions, their attitude is characterised by their determination to enjoy freedom of action in all matters which concern their welfare and prosperity. They made it abundantly clear that the Imperial Government could no longer expect them to follow its dictates in framing policies relating to immigration, tariffs, currency, etc. They have repeatedly asserted their independence in the League of Nations and it was partly due to their opposition that the International Labour Office was not able to extend its activities to the problem of migration. They did not agree to the principle of racial equality at the Peace Conference (1919), and accepted the resolution of the Imperial Conference on the equal treatment of coloured citizens of the Empire with reservation. In view of the growing spirit of independence in the Dominions, the re-organisation of the Empire on the basis of independent and virtually sovereign states became necessary for the purpose of holding the units of the Empire together. This was achieved by the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931. While agitating for the removal of their disabilities in the Dominions, Indians should bear in mind that neither the Imperial Government nor the Indian Government can be of any assistance to them. We should also take into consideration the trend of internal politics in the Dominions. In South Africa, for example, the Nationalist Party, jealous of British supremacy, is gaining strength. There the inevitable growth of

nationalism—what Turgot called the ripening of Colonies that makes them drop off the mother tree—has awakened a spirit of independence which refuses to be satisfied with a vague formula of Imperial unity, and resents any interference from outside in matters concerning the affairs of the Union.

Thus if we are to look to the future of Indian immigration within the Empire, we should bear in mind two important aspects of the Imperial Policy, namely (1) the consolidation of British interests in the colonies; and (2) the definition of Imperial unity in the Statute of Westminster (1931). The former leads to increasing restrictions on Indian immigration and the latter relegates India to a position in which she cannot protect her nationals from disabilities imposed on them by the Dominions where Indians enjoy less privilege in the matter of immigration and settlement than do the Japanese. The inference is obvious: India's political status should represent sovereignty of her own peoples whereas at present her position within the imperial orbit is nothing better than a colony. Her representatives at Imperial and international Conferences are nominated by irresponsible executives of the Government of India, taking their place by the side of those who represent their own nations and Legislative bodies. This anomalous position makes India's participation in intra-imperial and international conferences unreal.

Although in one of the imperial Conferences it was agreed that each part of the Empire had the right "to regulate the composition of its own population," India obviously could not derive benefit from this reciprocity clause. The number who came to reside in India from Great Britain and other parts of the Empire was of no importance; but what is important to note is that she cannot apply conditions of exclusion which are imposed on her nationals on the British Empire citizens even if the occasion to do so arises. When the question of the relation of the Dominions and India came to be discussed at the Round Table Conference and the sittings of the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, 1935, the official spokesmen were extremely cautious in allowing India freedom in this respect. "The attitude of Sir Samuel Hoare as Secretary of State," writes Keith, "was marked by singular inability to understand or express sympathy with the Indian point of view. He reluctantly admitted that he was bound to concede the right, already admitted by the Imperial

Conference in 1917, of the Indian legislature to regulate immigration of Dominion nationals, or British subjects connected with the Dominions, on the basis of reciprocity, though in fact no steps to this end have even been taken. But he fought hard to deprive India of any right to treat Dominion nationals, who were admitted to India, in any differential manner, insisting that they should be treated on the very favoured terms accorded to British subjects of United Kingdom domicile. The project was happily overruled, but not until it had created a painful impression of the opposition of the Secretary of State to just rights of India and his desire to establish the doctrine of European superiority on racial grounds."¹ Thus, under the Government of India Act, 1935, the relations with the Dominions and other parts of the Empire are not entrusted to the special responsibility of the Governor-General but placed in the hands of a federal minister "once federation takes effect." It is, however, evident that the maintenance of just and equitable relationship with the Empire would depend on India's own political status as a sovereign state. The denial of that status to India precludes all possibilities of securing civil, economic and political rights for Indians in the Empire overseas.

II

One of the effective means of consolidating British interests in the colonies and of safeguarding the vast empty spaces of the Dominions against non-European immigration is not to allow the influx of Asiatic races even though they are British subjects. The policy has therefore been directed towards encouraging the immigration of British people. The report issued by the Empire Development and Settlement Research Committee in 1934 suggested a plan for the redistribution of the population of the British Empire under a chartered company and observed: "Since 1914 net emigration has totalled 1,246,000. Had the average rate of the five years prior to the War (first World) been maintained, the number of emigrants would have been greater by some 3,000,000."

The policy of white settlement in the outlying parts of the Empire on a large scale has been encouraged since the first World War by a policy of assisted emigration. Under the Empire Settle-

¹ Keith, *The Dominions as Sovereign States*, 1938.

ment Act,¹ 1922, the Imperial Government undertook to assist emigration by a maximum annual subsidy of £3,000,000; but such a policy has been only partly successful, and the average expenditure from 1923 to 1929 was only slightly over £800,000 a year. In all about 400,000 people have been helped to settle overseas since 1918; but this number is less than in the years before the war when there was no assisted emigration. "The conclusion seems to be," to quote Carrothers, "that the policy of the redistribution of the white population of the Empire has failed, and that in so far as the Empire Settlement Act was intended to be the instrument of that policy, it shares in its failure. This failure is in no sense associated with a faulty or inefficient administration of that Act."²

Many factors contributed to the unsuccessful efforts for the redistribution of the British stock in the Dominions. In the first place, the area of suitable land now available in the Dominions is not sufficient to ensure white settlers a livelihood and the number of potential settlers is not great; for with the decline in the agricultural population in England and the migration from the land to the towns, there have been few who have been tempted to try their luck in predominantly agricultural countries where it would be equally, if not more, difficult, to obtain a living from the land. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that even in pre-war times a far larger number of emigrants were attracted to the United States where there were opportunities of industrial employment, than to any of the Dominions where they were granted free tracts of land. In Australia nearly half the population is concentrated in the five principal cities, and about one-third in Sydney and Melbourne alone. Better wages, social insurances and health services as well as numerous public services available only in towns make commercial or industrial employment infinitely more attractive.

Dislike of agricultural life, the growth of urban civilisation both in Great Britain and overseas, lack of real opportunity on the land overseas, climatic unsuitability and cost of transportation

¹ The Act provided for co-operation by the Government of the United Kingdom with the Government of any other part of His Majesty's Dominions or with public authorities or private organizations in the carrying out of agreed schemes for affording joint assistance to suitable persons in the United Kingdom who intend to settle in any part of His Majesty's oversea Dominions.

² *Emigration from the British Isles.*

for settlement overseas—if all these factors are taken into consideration, we may then understand why, since 1930, there has been for the first time an excess of returned immigrants over emigrants. The particular cause of this was undoubtedly the agricultural depression which began in 1929; but it shows, nevertheless, the largely uneconomic character of assisted white emigration for agriculture, if not to all the parts of the overseas British Empire, at least in those parts which are climatically unsuitable for permanent white occupation.

However, with the growth of secondary industries in Australia and New Zealand, the influx of British immigration may be increased, although the general effect on migration is not as yet encouraging. In 1937, over 8,750 persons from Great Britain settled permanently in Australia, and efforts to attract Europeans have not been relaxed. The Commonwealth Government then decided to offer substantial assistance to settlers who might be selected by the nomination system; but the Oversea Settlement Board did not hold out a bright prospect for large-scale land settlement by British or European immigrants. The nature and extent of encouragement offered to them may be stated here. In the first place, assisted passages would be granted to the emigrant of British stock provided he, if married, had £300 capital on arrival in Australia or an income of not less than £100 a year; and, if single, he should at least possess £50 capital. Secondly, the occupation of the immigrant should be a material factor in determining whether he would be likely to establish himself successfully in Australia.

Similarly, for the development of South Africa, the Settlers' Association formed in 1920 assisted over 9,000 families of various classes to emigrate to that country from the United Kingdom.

The Colonial Governments also realised the desirability of more European settlers within their jurisdiction. With a view to encouraging the immigration from the United Kingdom, it was proposed by the Kenya Government to borrow the sum of £250,000 for financing "closer white settlement" in extensive undeveloped estates owned by pioneer settlers. A state-aided scheme was drawn up to encourage new settlers of British nationality, inviting applicants who were able to invest a capital sum of a minimum of £1,500 on condition of an equivalent sum being advanced to them by the Government.

The policy of predominant white settlement in the tropics¹ raises a fundamental question of suitability of the regions for the white peoples. We have no space to discuss this complex problem in all its aspects and should be content to record here that except in such areas as marginal regions of Queensland (Australia), the moderate tropics of Florida, Cuba, Puerto Rica and Panama (Central America), the hot and humid tropics are generally regarded as being unsuitable for white colonisation. Certain interactions between the tropical environments and groups of white settlers have been observed and elucidated. All we can say at present is that most parts of the tropics do not offer a promising future for the settlement of the white peoples, especially if they are to labour as primary producers, and that these areas can only be developed by tropical races.²

III

A realistic view of the problem should, however, convince Indians that the policy of the Open Door in the Dominions and Colonies cannot be a practical proposition. They must recognise the fact that in those parts of the Empire where natural conditions are well suited for white settlers, there can be no question of any further immigration from India. It should not, however, be difficult to adopt some form of *selected* emigration from India to the tropical and sub-tropical zones of the Empire. These areas await development, and would greatly benefit by Indian colonisation on an agreed scale. There can be no justification for a policy which prevents the development of these areas mainly because of retaining them as special preserves of the white race. In these tropical parts of the Empire the Indian has already made a valuable contribution to the economic life, and under favourable circumstances he can indeed emerge as a civilising factor, enriching the native communities with his gifts of human understanding. The Indian is a very much better cultivator of the soil than the native; he is accustomed to small holdings and to mixed farming.

¹ For an accurate delineation of tropical areas I regard Miller and Huntingdon's definition as satisfactory. They defined the tropics as lying within the annual isotherm of 70 deg.

² For a lucid discussion of the problem, see A. G. Price, *White Settlers in the Tropics*, 1939.

The advantage of having Indian settlers in the tropical areas was realised by the Germans, who sought to introduce some 800 Indians in German East Africa towards the end of the nineteenth century. The scheme did not come into being because of the unwillingness of the proposed settlers to relinquish their British Indian nationality. The theory that under conditions of free movement of population within the Empire overseas there is likely to be large influxes from India is not warranted by the history of Indian emigration. On the basic assumption of India's independent political status, under which she would be in a position to negotiate treaties and alliances with other constituent members of the Empire as a free party, it should be possible to come to an agreed settlement in regard to selected and well-regulated migration within the Empire overseas.

An Australian delegate to the British Commonwealth Relations Conference in Sydney (1938) declared that "a start must be made in Australia with a constructive answer to the Indian migration question." He suggested that the problem of racial exclusiveness could be solved along "horizontal lines through friendly negotiations between Australian and Indian Labour organisations." Indeed, it was argued that the Commonwealth of Australia should be prepared to take an enlightened view on Indian immigration, so that their policy of exclusion and restriction might not affect the Indians. Those who advocate the White Australia Policy declare that in a country where only a partial fringe round the coastline of over 12,000 miles is settled, the risk involved in allowing free entry of the peoples of Asia into uninhabited parts of the continent is great; but *selected* immigrants from India cannot be reasonably regarded as a threat of "swamping the continent" or the territories (e.g. New Guinea) now under the administration of the Commonwealth. The problem of colonising her tropical areas has to be approached without racial bias and with due appreciation of scientific facts. I would state most emphatically that it is not a safe policy to keep her Northern territories sacrosanct, and that it would be a wise course to adopt if the vast empty spaces were filled by hardy Punjabis and industrious Madrasis. It would not be difficult to draw up schemes for emigration and settlement that would be acceptable to both India and Australia once the Dominion statesmen realise that the policy of a "White Australia" is not altogether conducive to the

economic development of the country as a whole. That policy is justified in the eyes of Australians by economic necessity, because the influx of Asiatic emigrants with a low standard of living would adversely affect European workers. But opportunities given to Indian immigrants for participation in the development of agriculture may be fruitful in several ways. There is, for example, a great scope for primary industries in North-Western territories, where climatic conditions are favourable to Indians but not suitable for people of the temperate zone. Of the prospects of extending mixed farming in these areas, we quote Dr. Dudley Stamp, who says:

“Indian agriculture as far as crops are concerned could be applied to a considerable part of uninhabited Northern Australia. When the time comes for the development of this great area of Northern Australia, the lessons learnt in India will be invaluable. It is scarcely too much to hazard that in the dry, light soils of North Australia, the oilseeds, particularly perhaps the groundnut, will prove a salvation as they have done over much of the dry belt of Burma.”

In view of the soil and climatic conditions of this area, efforts should be directed to the cultivation of dry-farming crops rather than those usually grown in plantations.

On the question of suitability of the Northern territory for Indian colonisation, it is instructive to quote an extract from a communication written to an Australian agricultural expert by the Director of Agriculture, Bombay Presidency. He says:

“I should say that the conditions in the Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Bijapur districts are not dissimilar. We have there average rainfalls per Taluka ranging from about 17 to about 27 inches and with six months of the year having very little rain. Yet these areas support a large population dependent on agriculture. In Ahmednagar and Sholapur districts there are of course certain areas commanded by canals, but the great bulk of the three districts has got no irrigation. Both *Kharif* and *rabi* crops are grown. . . .”

The past failures in developing this territory as white settlements, however, led to contrary opinions in regard to agricultural possibilities, and some authorities believe that it is not possible to maintain a reasonable standard of life in these inhospitable

regions. But the Commission (1937) appointed to inquire into this problem reported that "Chinese gardeners and coloured domestic servants on indenture should be admitted on a limited scale. If its recommendations are adopted the Commission makes the moderate claim that in twenty-five years the Northern territory should have an annual production worth £4,000,000.¹

The Commission did not, however, indulge in optimistic delusions in regard to the "vast undeveloped potentialities" of tropical Australia, which is described as a "delusive yet romantic place," but a source of heavy liability to the Commonwealth Government. Summing up the recommendations of the Commission, the *Times* correspondent observed as follows:

"During the Commonwealth's 26 years of control, the Commission says, expenditure has exceeded £15,000,000, the white population has increased by only 2,144, production has expanded but slowly. The deficit for the last financial year was £611,000, production was valued at only £499,000. Of the population of 5,454, excluding the aborigines, only 3,800 are Europeans. It will, it is stated, be difficult to establish a progressive and virile community unless these conditions can be overcome. Investment must be encouraged more than anywhere else in Australia, revenue considerations must be subordinated to those of production and development. Encouragement must be given to the development of holdings and to the improvement of stock by the elimination of Crown resumption rights from the moderately sized leases when the lessees spend extensively. Settlers must be enabled to market their products at a reasonable cost, the costs of living and of labour must be reduced to the level prevailing elsewhere in Australia, industrial arbitration must be provided for the workers, and bureaucratic methods generally avoided."²

However, I believe that, barring the arid zone which is totally unsuited to settled agriculture, a system of intensive mixed farming may be adopted under adequate scientific direction, and that a considerable part of the coast lands may well be made suitable for rice cultivation under such systems of irrigation as are prac-

¹ A. G. Price. *White Settlers in the Tropics*. American Geographical Society, 1939.

² *The Times*, December 9th, 1937.

tised by Asiatic rice-cultivators. The introduction of the Indian buffalo, both for milking and draught purposes, should prove satisfactory in the Northern territory.

Another region which offers an attractive field for Indian colonisation is the East Indian Archipelago. It stretches from Malaya, which it includes, to the northern shores of Australia, and comprises the islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Philippines, New Guinea and several adjacent island groups. The entire archipelago, with an area just over a million square miles of land surface, has a population of nearly 80 millions, but the portions under the British Empire consist of Malaya, Northern Borneo and half of the island of New Guinea. We have already mentioned the position of Indians in Malaya, and here we refer to those parts of the Archipelago where, so far, no Indian immigration has taken place. There are a number of Indian merchants in North Borneo, and a few have settled down as planters.

Northern Borneo is as large as Ireland and it is situated in the same latitude as the island of Ceylon, and has similar physical features. New Guinea has an area of about 320,000 square miles, with a population not exceeding one million, approximately only four persons per square mile. If the adjacent islands be added, its area "equals that of the Bombay Presidency, Madras and United Provinces of India." The average rainfall is about 80 inches and soil conditions for the development of tropical agriculture are known to be favourable. Cotton, sisal hemp, coffee, tea, cocoa, tapioca, tobacco, cocoanuts and several varieties of tropical fruits may successfully be grown. We are informed that the best varieties of sugar cane grown in Queensland were obtained from the gardens of New Guinea natives. Indeed, these two territories may truly be described as the most neglected "estates" of the Empire. Can they be developed by white settlers? Should these wide tropical areas be kept reserved for the expansion of the European races in a continent where the population is on the increase?

Northern Borneo was governed by a Chartered Company* which had its headquarters in London, and New Guinea was

* North Borneo was formally proclaimed as a Crown Colony at a ceremony at Jesselton on July 15, 1945. The Secretary of State for the Colonies (of the Labour Government) in a message said that the North Borneo Company was the last of the great chartered corporations entrusted not only with economic development but with the political government of vast colonial territories. He added that the North Borneo Company had played the same romantic, pioneering part as the East India Company.

administered by the Colonial Office until a few years after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, when it was placed under the control of that Government. After the first World War, the former territory of German New Guinea was mandated to Australia. The backward economic condition of these territories is largely due to the policy of exclusion of Asiatic labour in conformity with the general attitude of the Commonwealth of Australia towards non-European immigrants. Not only does the policy of racial discrimination operate in British New Guinea, but also in the Mandated territory which is administered under Australian laws as an integral part of the Commonwealth. We cannot but agree that this form of Mandate is nothing less than annexation.

Let us see how Sir Hubert Murray, who was once a Governor of New Guinea (Papua is the title of the territory in official documents), defends the policy. On the question of developing these territories by the introduction of Asiatic labour, this British administrator writes:

"There is no doubt, and I do not suppose there has ever been any doubt, that one could develop the territory much more rapidly, and much more completely, if coloured labour were freely admitted. We fully realise this, but we have, nevertheless, decided to sacrifice the present for the future, and to exclude alien labour, and the Commonwealth agreed. We see that even with compulsory repatriation a considerable number of aliens would remain and would cause a race problem in the future; and in addition, there is objection, which appears to me conclusive, . . . arising from the proximity of Australia, and the danger of immigrants crossing the comparatively few miles of intervening ocean. The principle of Asiatic exclusion is said to be narrow, and so it is, if patriotism and self-preservation are narrow. The principle is doubtless a heavy handicap in the development of a new country, but we have shouldered it deliberately and we will carry it to the end."¹

It may not be irrelevant here to make a passing comment upon the administration of the territory by the Commonwealth of Australia. One of the principal industries of New Guinea is sugar,

¹ Sir Hubert Murray, *Papua of Today*.

but it cannot enter Australia. The export of another commodity, copra, suffers from the application of the Australian Navigation Act to New Guinea, under which "only Australian ships manned by Australian crews and paid at Australian rates can carry produce from Papua to Australia," and the result is that it is impossible to market any Papuan product with profit in the Australian market. Then, the application of the Immigration Laws to a country awaiting development and where there is a shortage of labour has severely affected its economic interests. And all this, as the Government of the Union of South Africa says in a report, has condemned the territory to "social and economic stagnation." The danger of leaving the habitable tropical areas undeveloped is obvious, and there is no reason why the policy of selected immigration from the densely populated areas of the Empire should not be adopted as one of the effective means of providing greater opportunities for those members of a "great family" who are unable to secure even the most frugal existence in their own country.

The trend of events in the Pacific is, however, moving towards inevitable developments which may successfully resist the extension of the White Australia policy even to these vast areas in close proximity to countries with increasing populations. The guardians of white civilisation or advocates of British imperialism should not be blind to the fact that the natural area for the settlement of immigrants from overpopulous Asiatic countries lies in the Pacific region, where conditions for settlement are favourable. Japan developed the territories she controlled as Mandates, and made no secret of her intention to expand in every possible zone in the Pacific.

IV

I have already mentioned the various schemes drawn for the purpose of facilitating Indian settlement in British Guiana. The conditions there are favourable, and if freed from malaria on the lines successful in Panama, the prospect for organised settlement would be greatly enhanced.

"The room for the expansion of cultivation in that country is admittedly great," observes the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India. "Out of a total area of 89,480 square miles, only 219 square miles are at present cultivated, and the present population numbers only 304,000 of whom, as we have

seen, about 125,000 are immigrants from India. The total cultivable area has not yet been ascertained, but it is known that, in the strip between the sea and the mountains about 300 miles in length and from 25 to 30 miles in breadth, there are some 3,000,000 acres of cultivable land. This land is generally suitable for growing sugarcane, cocoa, coffee and rice. We notice that Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor of British Guiana, speaking recently at the Royal Colonial Institute, estimated that the colony was capable of carrying a population of approximately 3,000,000. He also considered that the only source from which population could be drawn was India. As we have already stated, a scheme has been approved for Indian immigration into the colony, but has not yet been brought into operation because the terms are considered unremunerative by the planters. This scheme appears to us to be worthy of further exhaustive investigation, for the possibility of doubling the Indian population resident abroad is not to be lightly disregarded."

But the Government of British Guiana sent back nearly a thousand Indian immigrants, although they could be settled on the great tracts of cultivable land in the colony. Most of these men went there as indentured labourers. The truth is, since the abolition of the system of indenture in 1917, the policy of the Government and of the colonial planters has followed the tradition of South Africa and Kenya. They do not wish to tolerate the growth of a *permanent* Indian population in British Guiana. Its presence does no longer fit into the system of labour exploitation and may even stand in the way of fulfilling the imperial purpose in the Colonial Empire !

It is significant, however, that in dealing with the problem of finding homes for Jewish refugees from Central Europe, the Imperial Government have not merely expressed their desire to accommodate them in British Guiana, Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland and other parts of the Colonial Empire, but have taken steps to devise schemes of permanent settlement. In Kenya a scheme for a Jewish settlement has already been devised and approved by the Government. In Tanganyika over 50,000 acres would be available for the purpose; "but the most hopeful area for settlement," writes *The Times* in a leading article, "lies in the uplands of British Guiana. Here there are about 10,000 square miles of sparsely inhabited country, which may prove suitable for

agricultural settlement. . . . Missions sent by the organisations now working on behalf of the refugees are assured of an official welcome both in Tanganyika and in British Guiana; and Mr. Chamberlain has made it clear that His Majesty's Government are ready to give them the benefit of expert advice and help in their investigations."¹

This generosity was not, however, extended to Indians in British Guiana, by enabling them to colonise in the regions of Essequibo and the North-West district. Although the British Government have not assumed any official responsibility in the matter of settling refugees from Central Europe, the readiness to accommodate them in the Empire overseas shows that the question of immigration is largely determined by the epidermis of the race. It is argued that they should be "the main instrument for development" of the Colonial Empire. Referring to a remarkable accretion of wealth and strength from the settlement of Huguenot refugees, Sir Edward Grigg, M.P., a former Governor of Kenya, in his speech at the East African Dinner, observed:

"Had we sufficiently realized that another such opportunity was knocking at our doors to-day and that we of all peoples, with our immense control of undeveloped lands, had a moral obligation no less than a material interest in studying and using it to the best of our powers? Thousands of able and industrious Europeans were now without a hope or a home; and we were the guardians of much unfilled territory, with corresponding duties not only to the native population but to humanity at large."¹

The truth behind such eloquence is that the influx of Europeans is to be an asset to the Colonial Empire in the struggle to maintain the supremacy of the white peoples; while the fact that the fundamental development of the tropics is possible only through colonisation by races acclimatised to these environments is ignored. It is not difficult to realise that the conditions of success of white colonists in these regions do not exist and that they cannot be created. On the other hand, the development of rice cultivation in British Guiana was made possible by the thrifty and industrious Indian farmers, and today it has assumed a position second in importance

¹ *The Times*, November 22nd, 1938.

² *The Times*.

to sugar—the principal industry in the Colony. Since they have proved themselves capable of colonising within the limits set by the climate and the soil conditions, it is hoped that the question of selected Indian immigration to British Guiana will be reconsidered in the interests both of India and the Colony.

Near at home, Ceylon may offer scope for limited Indian colonisation as one of the effective means of accelerating the agricultural development of the Colony. At one time it was suggested by a Committee¹ of the Colonial Government that a system of land settlement for agricultural immigrants from South India should be devised as a step towards the extension and improvement of agriculture. But the proposal was not favourably considered by the authorities in Whitehall.

These are, then, a few examples taken at random. I would suggest that the possible territories where Indian colonisation might be given a fair chance should be carefully surveyed by competent authorities; and that the selection of immigrants should be based upon a certain standard of efficiency in regard to their capacity to adjust themselves to new circumstances of life and labour. A properly constituted Board might advise the Governments concerned in matters relating to selected immigration. And one hopes that the increasing solidarity and strength of Trade Unions within the Empire would draw India in close co-operation with them. It would then be possible to adjust without any racial bias those economic factors that are closely related to the problem of selected emigration from India.

V

A radical measure for protecting unskilled Indian immigrants against unfavourable conditions of employment in the Empire overseas consists, of course, in the total prohibition of recruitment for these territories. But it is not practicable—not because of overpopulation, but owing to the fact that rural life in India has long been subjected to disintegrating forces, which give rise to a landless proletariat. There is an abundant source of cheap labour and the emigration policy of the Government of India rests upon the fluctuating requirements of the plantations in Malaya, Ceylon and Polynesia. We will presently refer to this question of rural rehabilitation as a means of solving the problem of emigration.

¹ Marjoribanks and Marakkayar Report.

Here I turn to the problem associated with the migration movements involving large-scale recruitment.

While there is general agreement in regard to the policy of assisted emigration of unskilled labourers from India, the system adopted for recruiting requires further administrative supervision. At several recruiting centres in the United Provinces and Madras, I have witnessed how the collecting agents deal with the recruits. Whatever may be the legal provisions for securing decent treatment, it is not realised that moral principles have but little hold over these agents. Not until I had seen their cynical indifference towards humane treatment of the labourers at Gopalpur, in the district of Ganjam, did I realise why the Chinese who emigrates on his own initiative calls the recruiting system (*Kangany*) "Pig business."

From what I have been able to investigate in the recruiting areas, it appears to me that our indigent population does not offer spontaneously to leave their villages to take employment in the plantations in Malaya and Ceylon, and that pressure brought to bear on them to accept contracts from the recruiters reduces the system to something very similar in its effects to that of legalised forced labour. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that recruiting regulations and labour legislation are adequate for the purpose of checking the abuses of the *Kangany* system. Under the circumstances obtaining in rural India, agents can easily succeed in circumventing the labour laws, however stringent they may be, with the co-operation of money-lenders, landholders and even priests! It is not enough to issue licences to professional recruiters, who usually operate through a large number of assistants: the entire recruiting operations need to be carefully watched.

In the first place, it is necessary to scrutinise details of these operations, in order to be assured that the recruited workers have not been subjected to illegal pressure or to deceptive methods, and that they are fully aware of the particulars of the conditions of their prospective employment. Non-official organisations may be entrusted to supervise labour recruitment throughout the districts where *Kanganies* work, and it should observe the effects of recruiting upon the economic, social and moral life of the districts. The official Labour Departments should annually publish a resumé of all recruiting operations, with details of the worker and his

family, his place of origin and of the conditions of his employment.

As regards terms of employment, I believe that the practice of recruiting workers for a short period is not to their own interests or to the interests of the community, and that it should be discouraged. For a long term engagement, workers should not be separated from their families, and a small allotment should be made available to them for the cultivation of vegetables and fruit.

Secondly, the physical fitness of each worker should be determined by a thorough medical examination at the recruiting depots, and the report of the examining medical officer should be available to the public. Such examination must conform to the standard of physical fitness as set out by the Public Health Department of the province from which the worker is recruited.

Thirdly, a careful enquiry should be made in regard to advances given to the worker in lieu of his wages. The illegality of the *Tundu* system, which I have described in Chapter IV, does not deter the recruiting agent from involving the worker in a trap of indebtedness.

Lastly, the treatment of the workers during the journey in regard to food and necessary comfort is a matter which cannot be left to the discretion of the recruiting agent. I would suggest a convoy system; that is, a responsible person, preferably selected by a Standing Emigration Committee, should accompany each transport of Indian labourers.

But the ultimate goal should be the replacement of the *Kangany* or any such system by the voluntary movement of labour. The committee on the Recruiting Labour in colonies, appointed by the International Labour Office, reported to the 19th Session of the Labour Conference, held at Geneva in 1935, that "however much the organisation and regulation of recruiting might be perfected, there will always be loopholes for abuses, . . . and in the interest of both employers and workers it is desirable that it should be replaced by the free offer of labour." Such a proposal is, however, resented by those who have so long enjoyed the advantages of organised emigration from India through artificial pressure.

At any rate, this system of recruiting does not always work to the satisfaction of the employers, who are even beginning to doubt its efficiency; but they are not prepared to inaugurate any sudden or drastic change in the method of obtaining cheap labour. The truth is, the conditions of labour are such that there can never be a

spontaneous offer of labour; nor does the development towards a system of voluntary emigration from India appear particularly favourable to the employers in the Empire overseas.

VI

The attempt to reduce the Indian communities by the method of repatriation is one of the main features of the policy adopted by the Dominions and Colonies. Therefore the question of adopting appropriate measures for settling the repatriated labourer is one which requires our urgent consideration. It is estimated that no fewer than 125,000 Indians have returned to India from the Empire overseas since the first World War, and Mr. Waiz tells us in his report on the condition of the returned emigrants that "the desire to see their Motherland and the rumour that India had obtained Home Rule" have encouraged them to abandon the life of an exile. But complaints are heard that social circumstances in their own homeland do not enable them to enter easily into the community; nor do they find proper avenues of employment. It is a discredit to India that these returned emigrants are often obliged to offer themselves for recruitment and to take up again the yoke of servitude abroad from which they had escaped. Disillusioned, they come down from villages and congregate at the ports in the hope that they may be sent back to the Empire overseas at Government expense. The kind of treatment accorded to them by their own countrymen may be realised from the bitterness with which they now turn their face against their Motherland. "I asked them over and over again," writes Mr. Waiz, "if they would consider the prospects of work in India, to which they gave a most emphatic 'No'. 'Anywhere out of India' was their cry. They would not discuss any other point than the prospects of being sent out to the Colonies."

In 1922, through the courtesy of the Emigrants' Friendly Society, Calcutta, the late Rev. C. F. Andrews and I had an opportunity of visiting a camp of the returned emigrants at Matiaburz, a suburb of Calcutta. There in those huts utterly unfit for human habitation, one saw to what depth of human misery the lower strata of the vast wage-earning class in India had sunk. Indeed, there are no more tragic figures than these emigrants, begging to be sent back to plantations and mines under any con-

ditions imposed on them by their employers. They returned to India for a meagre livelihood, but found that, while the scope for even a bare subsistence was extremely narrow, the ugly and degrading social environment offered them no reasonable hope of being able to adjust themselves to Indian rural life.

In the first place, it is important that adequate arrangement should be made for ensuring the necessary comfort of the returned emigrants on their arrival at ports. The task is difficult and cannot be discharged by *ad hoc* committees or by charitable philanthropic institutions. It requires a special organisation with a permanent staff.

Secondly, there is a need for an all-India organisation (e.g. a Repatriated Labour Settlement Board) for implementing the policy of repatriating those Indian emigrants who desire to return to India and of providing work for them. It should be a permanent organisation which should investigate the possibilities of land settlement in areas where cultivation may yet be extended with a reasonable capital outlay, and where it may be developed on an intensive scale. The opportunity might be taken to introduce farming on a collective system, impressing upon the mind of the settler that under such an arrangement he is not just an agricultural labourer or a peasant fighting his own battle, but that he is part of a collective organisation which safeguards his interests against the insidious domination of vested interests.

The initial task before the proposed Repatriated Labour Settlement Board would be to survey each province with a view to planning practicable schemes, bearing in mind that a combination of agricultural and small-scale industrial settlement offers the best prospects of satisfactory labour settlement. The creation of such settlements for repatriated labourers is not easy, but the difficulties might be surmounted if only our public men had the *will* to make them successful. The history of similar enterprises in Italy, Greece, Palestine and South America is encouraging. The settlers in Palestine "have turned sand-dunes into orange groves." They have reclaimed the uncultivable land and have successfully introduced modern agricultural methods. Flourishing orchards out of barren wastes and swamps witness the triumph of organised settlement. Forced by circumstances analogous to those with which Indian labourers in Ceylon and Malaya are frequently faced, the Mexican Government have started a scheme to

repatriate over one and a half million agricultural workers from the Southern States of America. Space will not permit me to enumerate certain features of this elaborate scheme; but I would point out that the arrangement under which each unit of family obtains 25 acres of land, and a loan from the State Agricultural Bank until his first cotton crop matures, is working satisfactorily.

Thirdly, this Board should give the fullest publicity to the schemes finally drawn for settling the repatriated labour. Each scheme should contain details of the conditions and advantages which it offers, and it should be, if possible, illustrated with photographs of successful agricultural experiments in a particular zone. Each zone should be planned on the principle of developing a genuine community enterprise. At the initial stage, the spirit of co-operation may be lacking, or the social atmosphere may not be congenial; nevertheless, the promoters of such schemes should be able to overcome these difficulties if they bear in mind the psychological aspect of the problem. The bitterness among the repatriated labourers needs the effective touch of instinctive generous leadership, and, once their confidence is won, I believe that the task of settling them on small holdings or on collective farms or of finding means of livelihood for them in appropriate secondary industries would be comparatively easy.

Fourthly, I suggest the formation of this permanent Board because it could be made responsible for making persistent efforts to persuade those emigrants to return to India whose livelihood abroad depends on occupations which lower the prestige of India in the eyes of foreigners. It is not merely a question of sentiment, but of necessity for the maintenance of national honour. Such a measure is indeed associated with national awakening. The Italian Government, under Mussolini for example, organised the repatriation of the Italian emigrants scattered about the world and set apart a number of "organised zones" for settlement. A number of coordinating committees should be formed in the countries overseas to undertake investigation of the conditions of livelihood of each Indian immigrant, and to conduct the necessary negotiations if his repatriation is desirable both for his own sake as well as for India's national honour.

Lastly, there is the question of finance. I cannot, of course, make a definite proposal for solving the initial financial difficulties involved in the work of organised land settlement. It is neither

cheap nor easy, but it should be an integral part of the National Planning now being considered by the Indian National Congress.

VII

In view of the circumstances of life and labour of our people in the Empire overseas, it is a matter of paramount importance that India must no longer remain as a reservoir of cheap labour, and the economic and social causes which drive the dregs of her population to migrate must be scrutinized with a view to formulating a comprehensive plan for increased agricultural production, and for the rehabilitation of village industries. Our population is estimated to be increasing by 3,400,000 per annum, and it is asked, Can India support her growing population within the country? While some of us are alarmed at the Malthusian spectre, or affronted by the complacent "blasphemies of the neo-Malthusians," the apologists of British imperialism advise us to keep the door wide open for the emigration of unskilled labour to the Empire plantations. In any case, the possibilities of absorbing a large part of our population into the economic life of the Empire overseas are comparatively small, and emigration cannot be regarded as a conceivable solution of the problem. The question of providing subsistence for our population is therefore of fundamental importance to India and to her emigrant children, and I should attempt an answer.

Generally speaking, mass migration takes place only when the earnings of agricultural and unskilled labour are higher at the *terminus ad quem* than they are at the *terminus a quo*. Planters in Ceylon or the Malay States offer about eight or nine annas per day for an adult male and five or six for an adult female recruited for plantations; but agricultural wages in those parts of India from which the emigrant labour is drawn do not exceed three annas a day for a man and half that amount for a woman.¹ It is estimated that there are over 110 million labourers in India who always remain on the verge of semi-starvation. In this desperate condition lies the root cause of misery of our emigrants, and so long as our social and economic life remains in a chaotic state, the merciless exploitation of labour, both inside and outside India, will not cease. It is not difficult to show that the great volume of emigration takes place from those regions where disharmony in

¹ An anna is equal to just over one penny.

the agrarian economy has become acute, and that the underlying causes of emigration are the survival of the antiquated system of land tenure and the destruction of the indigenous subsidiary occupations of the rural population.

A careful study of the figures for labour recruitment shows clearly how an improvement in the economic conditions of the depressed classes (*Harijan*) in the recruiting field results in a decreased supply available for emigration. There is indeed an intimate connection between the character of rural economy obtaining in a recruiting area and the frequency of emigration among its population. The proportion generally fluctuates in accordance with the variations in agricultural output. Ceylon is, for example, geographically very close to South India, where diverse socio-economic conditions prevail in different districts; and consequently there is a wide divergence not only in the average annual number of immigrants entering Ceylon, but also in regard to the employment they seek in the Colony. I will attempt to illustrate these variations by a table showing the sources of immigration into Ceylon from South India.

TABLE XI¹

Showing sources of immigration into Ceylon from South India

Districts	General character of rural economy	Average annual number of immigrants (1921-1935)	
		Plantation labourers	Free labourers
Tinnevely	Poor agricultural conditions and no subsidiary occupation.	2,267	42,898
Ramnad	Do.	6,092	15,618
Trichinopoly and districts around it.	Landlordism; defective land tenure; rice cultivation; no subsidiary occupation.	73,052	17,375
Arcot, Madras Chingleput, etc.		11,331	5,035
Travancore, Cochin, Malabar.	Better land tenure; development of small-scale industries.	545	15,984

¹ (Based on Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon, 1938).

That the rural workers are "pushed, not pulled to the city"—to quote a remark of the Royal Commission on Indian Labour—represents the truth behind the grim tragedy of Indian rural life. The pressure of population on the land, the uneconomic process of sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, inheritance laws, primitive methods of cultivation, inadequate facilities for marketing agricultural produce, heavy indebtedness—all these are only symptoms of a fundamental disturbance in the organic structure of rural economy in India. It is neither lack of skill nor overpopulation that has reduced the vast majority of our people to abject poverty. Under semi-feudal forms of agricultural economy, the application of scientific technique in agriculture cannot produce results beneficial to the actual tillers of the soil. The main reason for our low agricultural production may be found, not so much in the conservative "rule of thumb" methods followed by our cultivators, but in the fact that they have no easy access to the means of production. The free access to means of production, consequent upon the exclusion of the toiling masses from the possession of the soil, has been so restricted that the pace of agricultural progress is extremely slow.

The remedy for the "overpopulation" of India can be found, of this I am convinced, in augmenting the utilisation of her natural resources. We know, contrary to the prophecy of Malthus, that the "real antithesis is proximately at least not between population and food, but between population and wealth or productive efficiency."¹ Those countries of the West which have taken full advantage of the industrial revolution support an increasing population on a high standard of living, and have not as yet been overtaken by the calamities envisaged by Malthus. It is common knowledge that productive efficiency in India is incredibly low and consequently the pressure of population tends to depress even the bare standard of living of the bulk of our population.

After all, the population problem is in reality a problem of socio-economic organisation. The surest means of abating the pressure of population lies in a drastic reorganisation of the entire range of Indian rural life. Land reclamation, an extension of minor irrigation works, the introduction of collective farming, the revival of small-scale industries—all these means of increased production should now be explored. The completely indefensible land-

¹ Seligman.

tenure system must be eliminated from the economic structure if the incompetence of our agriculture is to be substantially rectified ; the fateful conditions that have placed agriculture under tribute to moneylenders in the form of interest-bearing loans secured on crops must be removed and the working time of our masses must be fully utilised by stabilising rural industries. Under a planned economy on an All-India basis, it would be possible to lessen the pressure of population in some parts of India, where this is due to its density. Our attention should therefore be turned to the problems of the re-distribution of population. Inter-provincial migration has so far been haphazard and chaotic, and it has raised complicated issues which must be faced boldly in the interests of India's economic and political solidarity.

It is of course obvious that in view of the actual increase of the population, the reliance upon potential sources of food-supply is a cold comfort; but it is the function of a state truly responsible to its people for their welfare to exploit all the latent productive assets. So long as this is not done, the theory that India is unable to support her growing population cannot be maintained as the basic cause of the appalling conditions of poverty which exist among her people. There is little doubt that the chief means of subsistence—that is, the production of food crops—can be increased by at least 50 per cent. under a moderately planned agricultural policy. We have had commissions and committees to give encouragement to the main desiderata of agricultural improvement, but no substantial advance has been made to formulate methods of re-orientation of our agricultural economy. The formidable obstacle to such development is the clique of vested interests, consisting of landlords, money-lenders, merchants, traders and middlemen, and it cannot possibly be overcome unless the cultivators themselves combine in protecting their own interests and the complacent Indian bourgeoisie realise the urgency of agrarian reform.

What we have already suggested in connection with the task of settling repatriated labour is applicable to the general policy of providing a living for our population. The removal of disabilities which handicap agricultural production, the planning of national economy on the basis of co-ordination between agriculture and industry, and effective organisations throughout the country for

carrying out plans of rural reconstruction are the tasks to which we must direct our energy. In a scientific and experimental age the menace of overpopulation cannot assume a serious proportion if both the State and the People are determined to carry on a crusade for the coordinated development of "fields, factories and workshops." We have faith in the victory of that crusade because science can be a great benefactor to those who strive to achieve social justice and to solve problems which have so long appeared insoluble. An appropriate recent example may be cited here.

Since 1933 the U.S.S.R. have been actively engaged in exploring the possibilities of colonising Siberia. On the Kola Peninsula there are only 80 to 90 frostless days in the year ; but in spite of such climatic conditions, soviet farmers are now producing big crops of grain, vegetables and other products. Wheat is now grown on a large scale at latitude 65 degrees north, which is about as far north as Iceland. Some experimenters have successfully grown grain at 70 and 72 degrees north, and hope soon to be doing it on a commercial basis. In this region 740,000 acres are under regular cultivation and, of these, about 600,000 acres are sown to grain.

In order to encourage settlement, the Agricultural Bank of the U.S.S.R. is greatly extending its credits to collective farmers migrating to the Far East and Siberia. All expenses of the journey are defrayed by the State and a long-term credit of 2,000 roubles is granted to each farmer for "doing up his house." The story of the conversion of this wild and desolate country into a rich productive land is one which should encourage us in undertaking colonisation schemes in those extensive areas described in Indian official vocabulary as "cultivable waste lands." The task of reclamation of these areas, and of re-fertilisation of the soil whose productivity is considerably reduced has to be undertaken in earnest.

VIII

We have so far considered the problems of Indian immigration and colonisation in the Empire overseas and have suggested the necessity of an organised movement for settling the repatriated Indian labourers in India. It remains for us now to make a reference to the domiciled Indian communities on whose position

depends, to a certain extent, the success of selected and regulated immigration. We must determine to what extent they have fulfilled their responsibilities, what efforts they have themselves made to raise their status, and how they have adjusted their life to the circumstances of the land of their adoption. These are the pertinent questions which we must ask in order to form an estimate of what the domiciled Indian communities may contribute towards enhancing India's status in the Empire overseas.

In the first place, let us frankly admit that these communities have not been sufficiently immunised from communal infection. Not only is there a lack of *esprit de corps* among them, but they exhibit fatal symptoms of internal dissensions even in matters that concern their social and economic welfare. So far the Indian community in Kenya has had no communal bias; but sinister forces have been operating for some time to stir up communal feelings. The fact of making religion an essential element in the life of the community is, of course, a commendable feature; but when religious dogmas become a fertile source of factions dividing the peoples and classes, they render a disservice to themselves and to India. Already there is a beginning of dissension among the Indians in South Africa, where the Colonial-born Settlers' Association appears to be in conflict with the organisation affiliated to the Indian National Congress. Such tendencies must be deprecated, as they are disastrous not only to the domiciled communities but to the future of India.

The immigrant populations must realise that their best chance of success comes from competent leadership based on solidarity among all sections of Indian communities. It is not enough, whenever Indians in the Empire overseas become agitated over any specific grievance, that the instructed public opinion of India should petition the British Government that the racial discrimination in South Africa and other parts of the British Empire should be courageously handled. The desirable step is to send a number of reliable men and women from India to the Dominions and Colonies so that they may assume the leadership of the Indian communities overseas. There are instances in the Colonies where Indians have the same political rights as others, but they are often unable to avail themselves of these privileges owing to lack of leadership among themselves.

Secondly, leaders of the Indian communities have not

adequately realised the urgency of providing social services for all classes among them. I do not minimise the importance of their own political organisations which have come into existence in the Dominions and the Colonies, but the circumstances which surround the life of the Indian communities there warrant greater attention than is at present given to education, health, housing, sanitation and other essential amenities of social life. For example, the first Indian Association was formed in the Federated Malay States in 1906, and had over 1,500 members in 1932. The annual conference, first held in 1927 at Kuala Lumpur, was a step in the right direction for inspiring unity, self-help and self-reliance among the Indians; but these institutions can never release a creative and driving force unless they are concerned with the vital interests of the labourers. The wealthy members of the chettiar community in Malaya could have rendered a useful service to the Indian population by spending a portion of their wealth, amassed by usury, for the welfare of the people ; but they built costly temples to God *Subramania* and poured out their resources for the maintenance of priests and of ceremonial grandeur associated with that mode of worship.

It is of utmost importance that every possible step should be taken by Indians to remove illiteracy from the Indian communities overseas. The majority of Indians are excluded from franchise because they are even unable to read and write their own vernaculars. Then there is a serious disparity in the percentage of literacy among men and women. Even in Fiji, where considerable improvement in the provision of educational facilities is recorded since the abolition of the indenture system, only 2.5 per cent. of women are literate, as against 39 per cent. men. I believe there exists in various overseas Indian settlements a fruitful field for educational experiments somewhat on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's Wardha scheme, which is designed to equip boys and girls for remunerative vocations as well as for intelligent citizenship. The wealthy Indians there should also set up educational centres, like the Jeanes schools at Kabate in Kenya, where Indians living in rural districts may receive training with a strong practical bias.

There exist such close relations between nutrition and health that the leaders of the Indian communities in the Empire overseas must direct their attention also to the problems of adequate and proper subsistence. While health services must adopt effective

measures for the application of preventive medicine, it is to the provision of a "balanced" diet that they must look for the improvement of health conditions of Indian immigrants. Hospital, dispensaries, maternity and nursing homes—all these are, of course, necessary; but, to quote the Public Health Commissioner of the Government of India, "No preventive campaign against malaria, against tuberculosis, or, against leprosy, no maternity relief or child welfare activities, are likely to achieve any great success unless those responsible recognise the vital importance of this factor of defective nutrition and from the very start give it their most serious consideration. . . . The first essentials for the prevention of disease are a higher standard of health, a better physique, and a greater power of resistance to infection."¹

I would therefore recommend that the Indian communities in the Empire overseas should undertake, through appropriate organisations, investigations into dietary habits, the food supply and the agricultural conditions obtaining in the farms worked by the Indian immigrants.

Thirdly, the domiciled Indians in the Dominions and Colonies should be in full agreement with any movement initiated by the native races for asserting their rights for self-determination and social justice. "The Non-European Front" formed in Cape Town has a total membership exceeding 30,000. The South African Students' Liberal League organised in association with the leading universities has been actively engaged in educating the public in regard to the political and economic disabilities of the native races. Their demands are as follows:

- "(1) Access to sufficient land for all sections of the people in the Union on equal terms.
- (2) The repeal of the Pass Laws.
- (3) The establishment of a minimum wage for African workers in urban areas based on the cost of keeping a family without the mothers having to go out to work.
- (4) No taxation of any wage under that regarded as less than enough for a family to live on; taxation of income above that level to be graded as to the capacity of the payer, beginning at 5s. per year."

¹ Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner of the Government of India, 1935.

Then there is the African National Congress the inauguration of which has opened a significant chapter in the history of the Bantu and other races. Africans in British Guiana and the West Indies are working to build up a united front against European domination.

With all these movements, Indians should be in full sympathy. While it is only natural that the leaders of the Indian communities in the Empire overseas should keenly follow the trends of all the movements in India for her liberation, their own efforts should be directed towards a closer understanding with the natives of the land of their adoption. Their struggle to gain a status in the Empire overseas, where they suffer from political and economic disabilities and where they are socially ostracised, has a common moral justification. It is not, however, suggested that Indians should now actively participate in native political organisations; for the basic problems of the indigenous peoples are not identical with those of the domiciled Indians. Any attempt to organise joint *action* against the Europeans may even be injurious to both and should not be encouraged. Mahatma Gandhi made the position clear at an interview with a Bantu leader, the Rev. S. S. Tema, who had asked him about the possibilities of such an alliance. "A Non-White United Front," Mahatma Gandhi observed, "will be a mistake. You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a 'menace' to the White population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance; you are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. The Indians can co-operate with you in a number of ways. They can help you by always acting on the square towards you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as 'savages' while exalting themselves as 'cultured' people in order to secure concessions for themselves at your expense."¹ But, in my judgment, the Indian leaders in the Empire overseas may perhaps render a great service to the struggle of the indigenous races by showing that in the power of non-violence

¹ *Harijan*, February 18, 1939.

they have the impregnable moral line of defence against injustice and aggression.

Here I must raise a note of warning. While I have no reason to think that the Indian communities in the British Colonial Empire *en masse* is unsympathetic towards the indigenous population, there are indications that certain sections of the Indian bourgeoisie tend to assume an air of superiority and claim special privileges. Their demands may, in some cases, be interpreted as pressing for a policy of discrimination against the indigenous races. Such tendencies are fraught with grave danger ; for they may give rise to racial jealousy and may help the imperial rulers to drive a wedge between Indians and the Colonial peoples. India to-day can never be a partner in the exploitation of the masses of any country. Her sympathy for their struggles is not just an ideological screen for the selfish interests of Indian capitalists.

Fourthly, leaders of the domiciled communities in co-operation with India should make an effort to disseminate the knowledge of Indian culture and civilization among the Europeans and the indigenous population of the Dominions and Colonies. To most of the Europeans, India appears to be peopled by low-paid Indian labourers and bumptious clerks. I well remember the remark of a lady member of an official party from South Africa which visited India after the first World War. She was greatly impressed by some of our cultural institutions and confessed to me that she did not expect to find such highly cultured people in India !

We are wholly responsible for the consequences of ignoring the need of cultural contact with the countries where Indians emigrate and settle. Our traders have not been purveyors of Indian culture, and our labourers are generally drawn from the lower strata of social life. It is a serious omission on the part of the advanced section of the Indian communities in the Empire overseas that they have hitherto made no serious efforts to establish cultural contacts with the indigenous population and other communities.

Steps should also be taken to establish permanent sections in some of the important museums in the Dominions, exhibiting specimens of Indian paintings, architecture and industrial art and craft, ancient and modern. A selection of books on the various aspects of Indian history, life and culture should be made available to the main libraries; and it ought to be possible to arrange

occasional broadcasts by men and women who are well qualified to take a broad view on Indian affairs. I have been told that the interest of the Empire overseas in Indian culture and civilisation is negligible, and that Australia, for example, is more anxious to understand Japan than India.

All these aspirations, which, as we have suggested, should be the concern of the domiciled Indian communities, would have some chance of success if they were actively supported by those groups of Europeans who realise the unwisdom of fostering racial prejudice within an Empire consisting largely of coloured populations. Happily such groups, though in a minority, exist : and our closest collaboration with them is most desirable. In particular, we would mention the South African Institute of Race Relations, which was founded at Johannesburg in 1929. Since its foundation it has accomplished much valuable work on many aspects of the racial problem of the Union. It has organised numerous investigations into the standard of life among the non-European peoples, has kept a watchful eye on new legislation and has on many occasions come forward with constructive criticism and advice. It has manfully urged an improvement of social and economic conditions and has been actively associated with the majority of social welfare measures in the Union. It co-ordinates the work of all those bodies interested in the harmonious existence side by side of the different races of South Africa and its disinterested zeal in this cause deserves the gratitude of all. This undertaking is an example which might well be followed in all other parts of the Empire where a racial problem exists.

The Christian missions should be jealous guardians not so much of the "white civilisation" as of the Christian ideals they wish to diffuse among the various races. We are asked to believe that the British Commonwealth is "a spiritual entity" and that "only a moral force could integrate" the diverse elements within its borders. If such declarations are not to be regarded as mere "emotional soporific," it is imperative that the Christian and other religious missions should under no circumstances appear to be in alliance with a policy of racial discrimination or with any measures calculated to perpetuate basic social injustice. Their great task of bringing religion to bear upon all human relationships can never attain a measure of success if they remain passive spectators of racialism. Through the vast net of their organisations, the

Christian missions can exercise a potent influence over the young generation in moulding their thoughts, and can inspire them with the significance of a larger affiliation of all the races within the Empire as a step towards a new world order.

Some years ago the Pope issued to Catholic Bishops the Encyclical letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* in which His Holiness commented upon the habit of styling people as "coloured persons." The expression almost instinctively calls up a status of inferiority, of backwardness in the march of civilisation and of the complete justification of imposing a superior alien rule upon the coloured races. This "unshakable belief in the essential inferiority of the coloured man's blood"—a belief which, as Dr Marais says¹ is held by most Afrikaanders and which is largely shared, as we have seen, by other European communities not only in South Africa but in other parts of the Empire—can be rooted out only by a persistent educational campaign against racial discrimination. The task of combating this racial prejudice should therefore be an integral part of popular education within the Empire, which is increasingly becoming a caste society. Dr. Marais sees no prospect of a change of heart among the dominant white population in South Africa; and concludes that so long as racial discrimination receives legal sanction, "the outlook for the coloured people must remain dark." He might have added that the encouragement of racialism would eventually lead to a formidable racial conflict in the continents of Asia, Africa and America.

I would therefore suggest that special efforts should be made for the purpose of disseminating "a certain body of real knowledge" that is available on the complex subject of the formation and development of ethnic groups, social and cultural environment of *Homo Sapiens*, and racial problems generally. But—as Huxley and Haddon warn us in their book *We Europeans*—"a vast pseudo-science of 'racial biology' has been erected which serves to justify political ambitions, economic ends, social grudges, class prejudices." It is of utmost importance that the instruments of popular education should be carefully watched by the authorities.

But racial antagonisms die hard, and it is suggested that the isolated attitude of the domiciled Indian communities renders the problems of inter-racial relations increasingly acute. We admit that the domiciled Indian communities do not always conform to

¹ Marais, J. S., *The Cape Coloured People*, 1939.

the ideals of citizenship and tend to live a separate existence; but, in all fairness to them it should be recognised that the civic sense can be developed only if the children of the immigrants are made to feel that the land which is to their parents a foreign country has indeed become home to them. How could this feeling of unity with the land of their adoption develop when they constantly live and grow up in the midst of a hostile environment and become fully aware of political, social and economic disabilities to which they are exposed? It is this enforced isolation of Indians that is largely responsible for chauvinistic temper or for extravagant nationalism among them. "Perhaps the most potent factor," writes Lord Hailey, "which is likely to affect the future relations of Europeans and Indians is the recognition that the latter are ceasing to be an immigrant body, and comprise increasing numbers who have been born and educated in the Union, and whose attention is directed less to the requirements of Indians as a separate community than to the attainment of Union citizenship."

But how can this be possible when the Governments of the Dominions and Colonies regard the Indian community as an alien element? Even the domiciled Indians are denied elementary rights of citizenship and yet are liable to the same taxation as Europeans. The Indians are restricted in movement from one part of South Africa to another, and are barred from many occupations and from the Civil Service. We have already referred to the passing of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946 which in effect confines the Indian community of some 250,000 to a series of "ghettoes," and which has once again unleashed the forces of repression by the Union of South Africa. Leading men and women of the Indian community are cheerfully courting arrest by camping on land which, under the law, they are forbidden to occupy. Since the situation has developed which "is likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations," the Government of India, under the pressure of Indian public opinion, have asked the United Nations Assembly to act under Articles ten and fourteen of the Charter. Field-Marshal Smuts and his Government resent appeals by South African Indians to India and to the United Nations Assembly and argue that the question is only a matter of South Africa's domestic affairs and that Indian settlers there are South African citizens. Yet they suffer under numerous dis-

abilities because they do not enjoy citizenship rights to which they are entitled.

An Indian soldier who fought in East Africa said to an English lady in the Union : " The Italian prisoners of war may ride in the same trams and trains with you ; but we who have made them prisoners may not."

So long as this policy of discrimination, statutory or otherwise, continues to operate in the Dominions and Colonies, the Indian communities there will not rest in peace and public opinion in India will find additional reasons for seceding from the Empire. For the disabilities from which Indians suffer, and the restrictions to common rights of citizenship which are imposed on them bring into sharp relief India's humiliating place within the Empire. India must insist upon a political status equal to that of an independent Sovereign State, since that status alone can give her an honourable place not merely within the imperial orbit but in the comity of free nations. The problem is no longer confined to mitigating the causes of temporary grievances of the Indian communities in the Empire overseas. They must be made to realise that the way of weakness resulting from their unequal status within the Empire can never be the way to a solution of the problem confronting them in the Dominions and Colonies.

CHAPTER VII

POSTSCRIPT

A greater part of the foregoing chapters was written nearly three months before the outbreak of the Second World War. Once again Indians, Chinese and Africans fought side by side with the Allied Nations, and their participation in a common struggle against Fascism should have some salutary effects upon racial relations. In view of the declared war aims of the Allied Nations, one hoped, for instance, that it would no longer be possible to maintain sharp demarcations between Asiatic and non-Asiatic, between white and coloured races in the spheres of post-war political and economic reconstruction ; that circumstances contingent upon world economy might make the issue of immigration and treatment of immigrants an international problem ; and that many of the features of Immigration Laws would be substantially altered for the purpose of reconditioning inter-racial relationships. It was encouraging to hear that in reference to occupational adjustments in rural populations, the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture raised the question of *intranational and international migration*.

But as soon as the perils of war receded, the Dominions and the Colonies reverted to their policy of racial discrimination with fresh vigour, and the initiative in this enterprise now came from Field Marshal Smuts. I have already mentioned the racial legislation directed against domiciled Indians which was passed in the Union of South Africa.* It has caused an outburst of indignation in India, and the South African Indian Congress pledged full support to the Passive Resistance Campaign launched by the Indian community. Large sections of the African population have expressed their solidarity with the Indians, realising that this "Law of the Ghetto," as it is called, is a revival of Fascist racial theory being put into actual practice.

* On the 17th April, 1946 by 78 votes to 50 the Union House of Assembly passed the 300 clauses of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill.

The Union Government intensified repressive measures and let loose a terrorism which unleashed that racial hatred so long cherished by chauvinistic Europeans in Natal. Some of the leaders of the Passive Resistance Movement were sentenced to hard labour ; hundreds of Indians were fined and, in default of payment, their movable property was confiscated ; while the treatment accorded to women and children of the passive resisters was reminiscent of Hitler's regime. Yet Field Marshal Smuts had the effrontery to declare in a recent speech in Aberdeen : " We must not tolerate conditions which could not be tolerated by any decent civilised community." Not only has he become a promoter of intense racial conflict, but he has set up formidable obstacles in the path of peace. His act is a challenge to all non-European races in South Africa. He resists Indian demand for adult suffrage because it would encourage millions of Bantu in claiming a similar right.

Meanwhile the struggle in South Africa goes on. India's demarche to the United Nations General Assembly against the action of the Union Government has been placed on its agenda ; but it is difficult to see what practical result can be expected of this protest. The implications of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act should be fully realised ; for the issue raised here far transcends the boundaries of South Africa, or other Empire countries where the colour bar exists in practice. One may only hope that the signatories of the United Nations Charter will not make their pledge " to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion " appear as a cloak of hypocrisy. They must know that race relations to-day are more strained than they have been in the past, especially in the British Empire and the United States of America.

The Governments of the East African Territories were not slow in emulating the policy of the Union of South Africa, and proceeded to take advantage of the various defence regulations introduced during the war. The Defence (Immigration Restriction) Regulations, 1942, were promulgated with a view to facilitating the evacuation scheme of coastal areas in East Africa ; but when the emergency which necessitated evacuation ceased to exist, the Governments of the Colonies continued to

enforce them. While these regulations are non-racial in character, in actual practice they affect the non-European only, particularly Indians. As a result of the intervention of the Government of India, the entry permits issued by the Kenya Government were granted to *bona fide* residents even though they might have been away for more than two years. It is now proposed to withdraw these regulations and to introduce a bill incorporating some of their features which would serve the purpose of restricting Indian immigration to Kenya. Yet during the war over 5,000 Indian artisans and technicians were invited to Kenya and the domiciled Indians there rendered valuable service to the Allied cause.

Again, in order to prevent the acquisition of land by non-Europeans in the Highlands, two bills were passed by the Kenya Legislative Council in 1944. The Land Control Bill provided for the establishment of a Board called "Land Control Board" consisting of three official and six non-official members nominated by a majority of the European elected members of the Council. No transaction in land in the Highlands can be effected under this bill without the written consent of both the Governor and the Land Control Board.

The Crown Lands (Amendment) Bill provides that no transactions in land situated in the Kenya Highlands can be effected without the written consent of the Governor, and that inter-racial transfers of shares of companies holding land in the Highlands are not valid without the specific sanction of the Governor. Both these bills were opposed by Indians in Kenya, and the Government of India were persuaded to make representations to His Majesty's Government requesting that the Royal Assent to them be withheld. His Majesty's Government, however, expressed their inability to accede to the request; and both bills received Royal Assent on the 14th December, 1944.

The next step was to restrict Indian immigration. Europeans in East Africa have long been agitating against the admission of Indians to the Colony, and now the Government was persuaded to introduce a bill embodying the terms of Immigration Ordinances passed during the recent war. The publication of the draft of this bill roused strong opposition among Indians; and local non-European communities supported them, realising that statutory discriminative legislation would establish yet another

precedent for retaining the privilege and power of the European settlers. Indians and Africans demand that the Colony should now be brought under International Trusteeship. Thus the status of Indians in East Africa and the recent legislation to deny them the privileges due to common citizenship have shown them how valueless is Lord Milner's assurance that "the avowed principle and the definite intention of the British authorities to mete out even-handed justice between the different races inhabiting East Africa" is of no value.

In two appendices I have made excerpts from relevant documents, showing the principles of Mandates Commission and of the new Trusteeship Council. Since the dissolution of the League of Nations, the functions of the Mandates Commission have ceased ; but as yet there exists no statutory basis for setting up a Trusteeship Council. Fundamentally the objectives of this Council, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, are similar to those of the existing Mandates ; but there are certain differences both in its composition and functions. The Permanent Mandates Commission was composed of a body of men nominated by the Council of the League of Nations, the majority of whom were nationals of non-Mandatory Powers ; but its functions were limited. It even had no authority to examine problems on the spot ; nor could it take initiative in matters concerning "the material and moral well-being and the social progress" of the peoples of the Mandated Territories. In reality the Mandates System was merely "annexation" under the label of "humanitarian idealism" or "international control."

The new Trusteeship Council is composed of a number of nations, about half of whom had mandates, while the other half includes representatives, in the main, of the big powers. The Council would work under the authority of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation. It would be empowered to formulate questionnaires on the advancement of the inhabitants of each Trust territory, and would ask for reports from its administering authority. But it is not, as Lord Hailey remarked, "unreasonable to suppose that the representatives (of the nations) would be concerned mainly with the interest of the nations they represent. How this will work out in practice only time would show.*"

* *African Affairs*, July 1946.

No sooner had the British Colonial Office declared its intention of transferring Tanganyika and Cameroon to the New Trusteeship Council than the Kenya Legislative Council adopted a motion opposing the decision of the Imperial Government. Meanwhile the Union of South Africa has raised the question of incorporating South-West Africa in its administration. But New Guinea comes under Trusteeship of the United Nations, and the Commonwealth of Australia is given the right to bring the territory into a Customs, fiscal and administrative union with other Mandated territories under Australian control. Under the Mandate Australia was not allowed to take defensive measures in New Guinea; but now her right to do so is acknowledged by the United Nations. In other words, this territory is brought under the complete and exclusive jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

While the proposals for the creation of Trust Territories are to be welcomed as steps towards international collaboration for the advancement and well-being of peoples who have so long lived under the colonial system, there is a sense of insecurity gaining ground among them, the feeling that their colonial status is not likely to disappear under the Trusteeship System. Ideas of racial superiority and the policy of racial discrimination are still defended as a Christian mission for bringing benefits of white civilisation to the non-European races. There are still no signs of relaxing the unbridled domination of the privileged classes who have acquired vested interests in these territories. On the contrary, their reactions to signs of social ferment there are to develop a new strategy for the purpose of "holding their own."

The post-war immigration policy of the Dominions is being framed with a view to increasing the white population. The Union of South Africa invites immigrants from Western Europe, particularly from Holland, and their applications are being dealt with by the Immigration Selection Committee appointed under the Aliens Act of 1937. Addressing his party, Field Marshal Smuts said: "In the next five or ten years we shall see that our human resources are not great enough for the development, industrial and otherwise, which is to come. We shall open our doors, and encourage people who can come here and help in that development. There should be such development in the Union that it should be necessary to have a much bigger European population."

The low birth-rate of Australia constitutes a serious problem. Concerned with the perpetuation of the white civilisation in the southern Pacific, the migration policy of the Commonwealth is to encourage European immigrants who can be readily assimilated into the social structure of "white Australia." In view of expanding economic opportunities, Australian labour is no longer suspicious of migration as threatening to depress wages. But I maintain that in weighing the possibilities of European settlement a definite distinction should be made between tropical and temperate regions.

I am not, however, suggesting unrestricted migration policy. What one must realise in this post-war world is that Man's history has embarked upon a new phase in which artificial barriers can have no place. The economic and social classifications based upon race, colour and creed are no longer valid—these are now conditioned largely by facilities of communication between man and man, and interdependence for his own welfare.

The statutory colour bar in matters relating to selective migration, for example, is prejudicial to "achievement of an economy of Abundance" aimed at by the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture held at Hot Springs in 1943. If the task of ensuring adequate nutrition for all peoples is regarded as international responsibility, it is imperative that there should be no statutory restrictions for colonisation in the unexplored regions of tropical and sub-tropical zones, and that the migration policy for these areas should be framed by an international authority. Such an authority may well function under the World Food Board recently established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation. It should undertake demographic surveys of both over- and under-populated areas and should have power to examine the agricultural problems on the spot and to initiate action in conformity with the ideals of guaranteeing "freedom from want" for all peoples. Selected migration is an essential factor in a world economy planned to expand. Full development of the natural resources of every country and full employment of man power are two inter-related factors in raising the world's standard of living. "International organisation in the post-war period seems to imply," writes Professor Harold Laski, "the need for the planned development of a world regarded as a common pool of wealth to which all nations have

access, on terms nearly equal as we can make them. The administration of the common pool needs common principles of action. Clearly enough, these common principles are the valuations of a new civilisation.”*

Responsibility for the application of these common principles rests with all nations, but the chief responsibility rests with the nations which control the destiny of multi-national groups of diverse colours and creeds. It is they who seek to retain the superiority of “white civilisation” in order to exploit economically undeveloped countries for private profit and national advantage. It is their settled conviction that colour bar is a necessity even for the welfare of coloured races !

During the First World War Rabindranath Tagore warned the nations of the West against their domination of the peoples of Asia and Africa. He said : “The political civilisation which has sprung from the soil of Europe and is overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies ; it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril, and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness . . . This political civilisation is scientific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. It betrays its trusts ; it weaves its meshes of lies without shame ; it enshrines gigantic idols of greed in its temples, taking pride in the costly ceremonials of its worship, calling this patriotism. And it can safely be prophesied that this cannot go on. . . .”*

Today when non-European races of the world are on the watch, it is certain that any prejudices which are based on differences of race, creed and colour will not be tolerated. The policy of racial discrimination enforced by legal barriers will make the achievement of common humanity singularly difficult, if not impossible. The strategy of causing atomisation of human society will never succeed in this “century of the common man.”

* Laski, Harold : *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*.

* Tagore : *Nationalism*, 1917.

Appendix' I.

INDIANS IN THE EMPIRE OVERSEAS.

<i>Country.</i>	<i>Total Population.</i>	<i>Indians.</i>	<i>Percentage of Indians to Total.</i>	
South Africa (a) ..	9,589,898	219,691	2·3	(1936)
Canada	10,376,786	1,599	0·01	(1931)
Australia	6,629,839	2,404	0·03	(1933)
New Zealand ..	1,626,486	1,146	0·07	(1939)
Burma	14,667,146	1,017,825	6·9	(1931)
Ceylon	6,083,000	750,000(b)	12·3	(1942)
Malaya	5,504,094	748,829(c)	13·6	(1940)
Fiji	198,379	85,002(d)	42·9	(1936)
Mauritius	415,462	269,885	64·9	(1938)
Jamaica	1,138,558	19,669	1·8	(1936)
Trinidad	448,253	161,076	33·9	(1936)
British Guiana ..	337,039	142,978	42·4	(1937)
Kenya	3,365,891	44,635	1·3	(1938)
Tanganyika	5,063,660	23,472	0·4	(1931)
Uganda	3,747,221	13,026	0·35	(1938)
Zanzibar	235,428	14,242	6·05	(1931)

(a) Natal - - 183,646.

Transvaal - - 25,561.

Cape Province - 10,692.

Orange Free State 29.

(b) Over 650,000 Estate Labourers.

(c) Includes Straits Settlement, Federated and Unfederated Malay States.

(d) 1939 Census gives 94,966.

Appendix II

THE MANDATES SYSTEM

Mandated Territories are lands which formed parts either of the Turkish Empire or the German Empire before the Great War of 1914-18. As a result of the "Peace Settlement" which followed, they were entrusted to certain governments to administer.

Article 22 of the League Covenant defines the Mandates System as follows :

"To those colonies and territories which, as a consequence of the late war, have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the states which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by persons not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the Covenant.

"The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility and that the tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandate on behalf of the League.

"The character of the Mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances."

An annual report of the administration of each Mandated Territory has to be rendered to the Council of the League, and these reports are examined by the Permanent Mandates Commission who act as the supervising authority for all questions affecting the Mandated Territories.

Mandates are divided into three classes, according to their state of development. Syria and Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan, and Iraq (Mesopotamia) were grouped in class A; Iraq was, however, freed from Mandatory control in 1923 and admitted to membership of the League of Nations in 1932; and Syria and Lebanon were promised virtual independence in 1936.

In Class B are the Cameroons and Togoland, both partly under British and French Mandate; Tanganyika under British Mandate; and Ruanda-Urundi entrusted to Belgium. The peoples in this Class "are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the Territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of the slave trade, the arms and liquor traffic, the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training for natives other than for police and defence, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other members of the League."

Lastly in Class C are territories such as South-West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization . . . can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards mentioned above. . . . These are South-West Africa (Union of South Africa), Western Samoa (New Zealand), Nauru (British Empire, carried out by Australia), New Guinea (Australia), and the Mariana and Carolina and Marshall Islands (Japan). These territories have, however, become virtually part of the Colonial empires of the Mandatory Powers.

Appendix III

INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEESHIP SYSTEM

The United Nations shall establish under its authority an international Trusteeship System for the administration and supervision of such territories as may be placed thereunder by subsequent individual agreements. There territories are hereinafter referred to as Trust Territories.

The basic objectives of the Trusteeship System, in accordance with the purposes of the United Nations laid down in Article 1 of the present Charter, shall be:

- (a) To further international peace and security;
- (b) To promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement;
- (c) To encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, and to encourage recognition of the interdependence of the peoples of the world; and
- (d) To ensure equal treatment in social, economic and commercial matters for all members of the United Nations and their nationals, and also equal treatment for the latter in the administration of justice, without prejudice to the attainment of foregoing objectives and subject to the provisions of Article 80.

The Trusteeship System shall apply to such territories in the following categories and may be placed thereunder by means of trusteeship agreements:

- (a) Territories now held under mandate;
- (b) Territories which may be detached from enemy States as a result of the Second World War; and
- (c) Territories voluntarily placed under the system by States responsible for their administration.

It will be a matter for subsequent agreement as to which territories in the foregoing categories will be brought under the Trusteeship System and upon what terms. It shall not apply to territories which have become members of the United Nations, relationship among which shall be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality.

The terms of trusteeship for each territory to be placed under the Trusteeship System, including any alteration or amendment, shall be agreed upon by the States directly concerned, including the mandatory power in the case of territories held under mandate by a member of the United Nations, and shall be approved as provided for in the Charter.

The trusteeship agreement shall in each case include the terms under which the Trust Territory will be administered and designate the authority which will exercise the administration of the Trust Territory. Such authority, hereinafter called the Administering Authority, may be one or more States or the organisation itself.

All functions of the United Nations relating to strategic areas, including the approval of the terms of the trusteeship agreements and of their alteration or amendment, shall be exercised by the Security Council.

The Security Council shall, subject to the provisions of the trusteeship agreements and without prejudice to security considerations, avail itself of the assistance of the Trusteeship Council to perform those functions of the United Nations under the Trusteeship System relating to political, economic, social and educational matters in the strategic areas.

It shall be the duty of the Administering Authority to ensure that the Trust Territory shall play its part in the maintenance of international peace and security. To this end the Administering Authority may make use of volunteer forces, facilities, and assistance from the Trust Territory in carrying out the obligations towards the Security Council undertaken in this regard by the Administering Authority, as well as for local defence and the maintenance of law and order within the Trust Territory.

The functions of the United Nations with regard to trusteeship agreements for all areas designated as strategic, including the approval of the terms of the trusteeship agreements and of their alteration or amendment, shall be exercised by the General Assembly.

The Trusteeship Council, operating under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assist the General Assembly in carrying out these functions. This Council shall consist of the following members of the United Nations:—

- (a) Those members administering Trust Territories;
- (b) Such of those members mentioned by name in Article 23 as are not administering Trust Territories; and

- (c) As many other members elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly as may be necessary to ensure that the total number of members of the Trusteeship Council is equally divided between those members of the United Nations which administer Trust Territories and those which do not.

Each member of the Trusteeship Council shall designate one specially qualified person to represent it therein.

The General Assembly and, under its authority, the Trusteeship Council, in carrying out their functions may:—

- (a) Consider reports submitted by the Administering Authority;
- (b) Accept petitions and examine them in consultation with the Administering Authority;
- (c) Provide for periodic visits to the respective Trust Territories at times agreed upon with the Administering Authority; and
- (d) Take these and other actions in conformity with the terms of the trusteeship agreements.

The Trusteeship Council shall formulate a *questionnaire* on the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of each Trust Territory, and the Administering Authority for each Trust Territory within the competence of the General Assembly shall make an annual report to the General Assembly upon the basis of such a *questionnaire*.

The General Assembly may, when it deems necessary, itself exercise any of these functions and powers.

Each member of the Trusteeship Council shall have one vote.

Decisions of the Trusteeship Council shall be made by a majority of the members present and voting. The Council shall adopt its own rules, procedure, including the method of selecting its president, and shall meet as required in accordance with its rules, which shall include provision for the convening of meetings on the request of a majority of its members.

The Trusteeship Council shall, when appropriate, avail itself of the assistance of the Economic and Social Council and of the specialised agencies in regard to matters with which they are respectively concerned.

(From *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945).

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INDEX

- Ali, H. O., 52
 Ali, Sir R., 33
 All Indian National Congress, 57, 83
 Altrincham, Lord, 210
 Amery, L. S., 149
 Ampthill, Lord, 65
 Andrews, C. F., 12-3, 16
 Calcutta, 214
 Fiji, 59
 South Africa, 33, 45, 49, 57, 64
 Zanzibar, 120
 Antilles—
 Chinese, 21
 Indians, 22
 Auckland, Lord, 21-2.
 Australia, Indian Camel, 29
 Indians in, 35, 68-71, 75-6, 171
 settlement possibilities, 202 *seqq.*, 236

 Banerjee, Sir, S. N., 150-1.
 Barnes, L., 160
 Baxter, J., 134
 Bolton, G., 62
 Botha, General, 56-7
 British Columbia, Indians, 27, 33-4,
 65-8, 74-5
 British Empire—
 general characteristics, 17 *seqq.*, 40
 status of Indians, 24, 26, 31 *seqq.*
 selective settlement of Indians, 39,
 202 *seqq.*
 Empire settlement, chap. 6
 British Guiana—
 Indian Settlement, 58, 60, 149-55,
 176, 208 *seqq.*
 Broome Commission, 85-7
 Buck, Sir E., 34
 Burma, Indians in, 132-9
 Burnett, F., 154
 Burton, Sir R., 119

 Calpin, G. H., 47, 49, 79, 172-173
 Cameron, Sir D., 117
 Canada, Indian immigration, 35, 65-8,
 70, 74-5, 193
 Cape Colony, Indians in, 47, 49
 Ceylon—
 Indians, 139-45, 167, 168, 172, 188
 repatriation, 218
 settlement possibilities, 211

 China, labourers from, 21
 Christian missions, 227-8
 Churchill, W., 94-5, 101
 Clifford, Sir H., 130, 139
 Crewe, Lord, 19, 57, 190
 Curzon, Lord, 59

 Delamere, Lord, 90, 101 *seqq.*
 Devi, Shrimat, Sarojini, 57
 Dilley, M., 104, 109-10
 Dobbs, C. M., 191
 Dodwell, H. H., 24
 Donoughmore Commission, 144

 East Africa—
 Indians, 27-8, 37, chap. 3, 168, 169,
 232 *seqq.*
 East India Company, 20, 21
 East Indian Archipelago—
 Indian settlement possibilities, 206
 Elgin, Lord, 46, 54, 92-3
 Eliot, Sir C., 119
 Empire Settlement Act, 199-200

 Feetham, Mr. Justice, 82 *seqq.*
 Fiji, Indians in, 59, 60, 71, 145-9, 167,
 171, 172, 178, 184
 Fischer, Mr., 64

 Gandhi, M. K., 223, 225
 in South Africa, 32-3, 46-7, 49
 seqq., 61 *seqq.*
 Gandhi, Mrs., M. K., 62
 Gandhi, Manilal, 33
 Gandhi, R., 49
 Gokhale, G. K., 49-50, 57, 58, 61
 Griffin, Sir L., 52-4

 Hailey, Lord, 14, 80, 229, 234
 Hamilton, Sir I., 67
 Hardinge, Lord, 16, 59, 60, 63, 64
 Harbeck, Lord, 162
 Hertzog, General, 78
 Hilton Young Commission, 106, 108-9
 Hofmeyr, J. H., 40-1, 87-8
 Hughes, W. M., 71
 Hulett, Sir L., 29

 Imperial Conferences, 19-20, 72-3, 77
 Indenture system—
 South Africa, 42 *seqq.*
 abolition of, 57 *seqq.*

India—

agricultural rehabilitation, 207 *seqq.*

Emigration Act (1837), 22, 44

recruitment for overseas, 43 *seqq.*, 212 *seqq.*repatriation, 214 *seqq.*

Indian Statutory Commission, 24

Indians overseas. *See under each country.*attitude of immigrant communities, 36 *seqq.*, 222 *seqq.*

education, 177-185

Empire immigration policy, chap. 6

health, 174-7

housing, 172-4

labour conditions, 160-9

social services, 186 *seqq.*

as traders, 36-7, 169-72

Jamaica—

Indians in, 22, 58, 156-9

Indian cattle, 29

Johnston, Sir H., 112-3

Kagany system, 126 *seqq.*, 141 *seqq.*, 212-3Keatinge, G. F., 151 *seqq.*

Keith, A. B., 108, 198, 199

Kenya and Uganda Railway, 28

Kenya—

Highlands, 20

Indians in, 34, chap. 3, 162, 169-70, 171, 181, 188, 233-4

Kirk, Sir J., 28

Kruger, President, 47

Laski, H., 236-7

Leys, Dr. N., 19, 30, 93, 103, 111-2, 181

Lytton, Lord, 28, 38

Macmillan, W. M., 157

MacNeill, 59ⁿ

Mactunes, T., 193

Makerere College, 182

Malan, Dr., 78

Malaya—

Indians, 124-31, 167, 172, 175-6, 183, 188

Mann, C. W., 184

Mauritius, Indians in, 42, 122-4, 183

Millin, Sarah Gertrude, 32-3

Mills, L., 127

Milner, Lord, 21, 90, 98 *seqq.*

Montagu, E., 101

Morgan, E. S., 162

Morley, Lord, 52, 58

Moyné, Lord, 157

Mullin, J., 154

Murray, Sir H., 207

Nana, S. M., 186

Natal, Indians in, 29, 42 *seqq.*, 50, 76, 36 *seqq.*

Naz, Sir V., 124

Nehru, J., 14

New Zealand, Indians in, 71-2

Norman, Sir H., 156

Northey, Sir E., 101

Orange Free State, Indians barred, 47

Passfield, Lord, 109

Pearson, S. V., 161

Pearson, W. W., 12-3

in South Africa, 33, 45, 57

in Fiji, 59

Permanent Mandates Commission, 117, 234

Pillai, D. B. K., 151 *seqq.*

Pim, Sir A., 120

Polak, H., 87

Radford, Bishop, 184

Rao, A. N., 133

Reciprocity Resolution (1917), 72-3

Reid, T., 142

Ripon, Lord, 47

Ross, MacGregor, 98

Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture, 13

on Indian Labour, 219

Salisbury, Lord, 27, 45-6

Sanderson Committee, 28, 45, 58, 122-3

Sapru, Sir T. B., 78

Sastri, S.—

Durban College, 179

Kenya, 103, 105, 108

in Malaya, 129-30

Queensland, 76

South Africa, 79

visit to Dominions, 74

Satyagraha, 52, 54 *seqq.*, 61 *seqq.*

Scott, Lord Francis, 111

Searle, Mr. Justice, 62

Simpson, Sir J. H., 148-9

Singh, Sir M., 153-4

Sinha, Lord, 73

Smuts, F. M., 25, 55-6, 61, 64, 72, 77, 86, 88, 194, 229, 231

South African Institute of Racc Relations, 186-7, 227

Stamp, D., 204

Steer, G. L., 163-4

Sydenham, Lord, 65

South Africa, Indians—

Cape Town Agreement, 79 *seqq.*

discrimination against, 32-3, 34-5

- general conditions, chap. 5
 High Commissioner, 33, 77, 79, 81,
 84, 85
 history of, chap. 2
 London Convention (1884), 27
 1946 position, 231-2, 235
 repatriation, 79-80
 U.N., 8-9, 229
See also under Provinces.
- Tanganyika—**
 Indians in, 116-9, 188
 and Trusteeship, 235
 Tagore, R., 12, 237
 Tema, S. S., 225
 Templewood, Lord, 196, 198
 Thomas, J. H., 106
 Thornton, Sir E., 173
 Tivary, V. N., 151 *seqq.*
 Transvaal, Indians in 47-8, 51 *seqq.*
 82 *seqq.*
- Trinidad, Indians in, 28, 60, 156-9, 168,
 176-7
 Tundu, 141-2, 213
 Tyson, J. D., 157-8
- Uganda, Indians in, 112-6, 171, 174-5,
 181-2, 188
- United Nations—
 South African Indians' appeal, 229
 Trusteeship Council, 234-5
- Waiz, Mr., 214
 Watt, Sir T., 78
 Webb, M., 178-9, 185, 189
 West Indies, Indians in, 28, 60, 155-9,
 168, 184-5
 Wilson, Sir S., 130-1
 Winterton, Lord. *See under Wood*
 Wood-Winterton proposals, 101-2, 103
- Zanzibar, Indians in, 119-21, 182

